

OVER
1,000
RATINGS INSIDE!

HOLIDAY BUYER'S GUIDE

Screw socks—tell loved ones exactly what you want for the holidays

LORD OF THE RINGS PRIZES!

Win a trip to Middle-earth or a copy of Return of the King! Plus, what's next for the series?



SPECIAL HOLIDAY ISSUE • EXCLUSIVE PREVIEWS • NEW REVIEWS

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- The **HOTTEST** holiday games
- The best titles for **PS2, Xbox, GameCube, and GBA**
- The **GREATEST** (and **WORST**) games of all time!



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- **Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow**
- **Ninja Gaiden**
- **Sonic Heroes**
- **Max Payne 2**
- **Maximo vs. Army of Zin**
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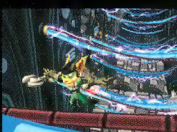
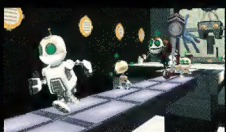
January 2004 ISSUE 174
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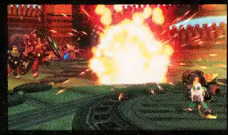
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They're back. And they're itching for action. With tons of planets to conquer in a whole new gigantic galaxy, you better believe Ratchet & Clank are gonna sink their teeth into some destruction. Ummm, destruction. With weapon upgrades, mods, armor and the ability for Ratchet to get stronger and smarter as the game goes on, this could get uglier than The Grandmas in Bikinis Calendar after-party. Speaking of parties, there's also hoverbike racing, space combat and gladiator arenas. As far as weapons and gadgets go, Ratchet & Clank are stacked with over 50 new ones, along with unlockable upgrades, so by the end of the journey, you'll go through more weapons and gadgets than a hungry fat man will go through chicken wings at lunch. Lock and load, baby, lock and load. www.us.playstation.com



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PlayStation.2



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- IGN

MATURE 17+



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PlayStation 2



eidos

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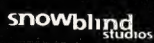
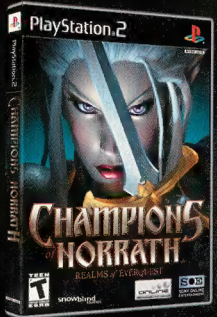
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legacyofkain.com

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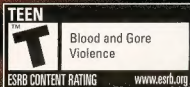
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Game Experience may change during online play

Home ain't that sweet.



TEEN



Crude Humor
Mature Sexual Themes
Mild Violence

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GAME BOY ADVANCE



So, where to?



Mona Lott is a dancer at Club Rubbi.

She digs her man Bing, but, that doesn't mean she won't have some lovin' to spare.



Fran Foolrow lets it all hang out at Pixel Acres. Play your cards right and you'll be seeing more of her. A lot more.



Goldie Toane - flex for her at the gym, and she'll coo over your buff body and maybe tell you a few dirty jokes if you're lucky.



Randy Hart's a regular at Casa Caliente where he loves to give bear hugs on the bear rug. A word to the wise - don't pull his finger.



The Sims
BUSTIN' OUT

eagames.com



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- ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY

"IT'S A MASTERPIECE."
- OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE

"9/10. SOLID GOLD." - GMR

▶ 01



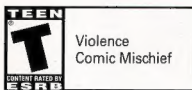
▶ 02



▶ 03



EXPERIENCE THE NEWEST MASTERPIECE FROM THE VISIONARY MIND OF MICHEL ANCEL.



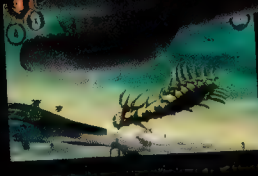
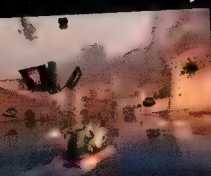
PlayStation 2





▶ 05

▶ 06



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202 Here's your chance to check out Middle-earth for yourself, as we're giving away a trip for two to New Zealand. You can also win free copies of the *Return of the King* game, too!

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THE ULTIMATE REVIEWS ISSUE

You know it. We know it. *EGM* reviews make for the most popular (and controversial) section in the mag. This issue includes over 1000 game ratings, and you find them throughout the following pages:

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HOLIDAY BUYER'S GUIDE

Whether you're naughty or nice, we'll still tell you which games you want on your wish list

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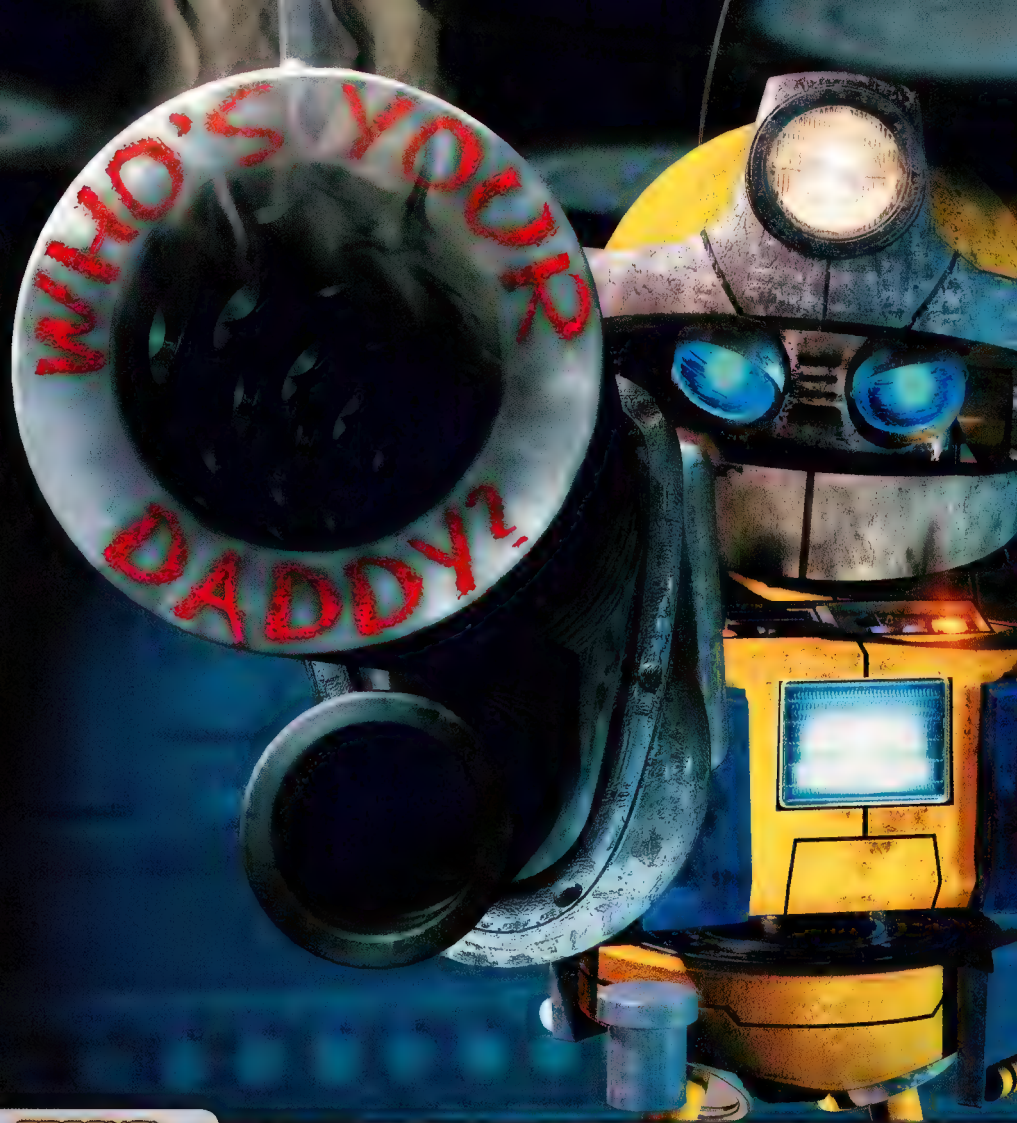
AFTERTHOUGHTS:

LORD OF THE RINGS: Ears brought the King back to Middle-earth, so what's next for the series?



I'm pinch-hitting for the editor-in-chief this month. In order to celebrate our pals Ultimate Reviews' issue. Within this sizable tome, you'll find a medley of opinions on the best and worst new releases, a fresh look at some musty titles, and over 1,000 reviews from the past few years. We're hoping that it's a handy resource for you guys. 'Cause based on my calculations, over 20,000 hours of serious game-playing went into this stuff.

— Shane Bettenhausen, Reviews Editor



ARSENAL



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RIVET GUN



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SCATTER BLASTER



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CLEANER



TORSTER

TEEN
T
 CONTAINS MATERIAL TO
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 Strong Language
 Violence



PlayStation 2



METAL ARMS

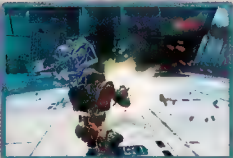
GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM

This bot's got nuts of steel.

He's delivering a warm welcome
to evil bots everywhere.



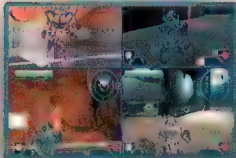
WEAPONRY



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MULTIPLAYER



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PlayStation 2



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*Nintendo GameCube game contains fewer songs.



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FAMILIAR ALLIES ARE AT HAND,
AND SOMEWHERE, SOMEHOW,
A FRIEND MAY STILL BE ALIVE...

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Suggestive Themes
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the review crew



DAN "SHOG" HSU, Editor-in-Chief
Shog stopped pretending he was busy ("editing and planning stuff!" he says) just long enough to write some actual content for *EGM*. Check out his...whoa—one-page story on *Manhunt*.
Now Playing: *SSX 3, Rainbow Six 3, "Busty Boss"*
Fave Genres: Just about everything



MARK MACDONALD, Executive Editor
Japanese soldiers, Cyon robots, turtles, terrorists, skeletons, anthropomorphic brains—Mark is hunched over thousands he was forced to edit in his review games last month.
Now Playing: *SOCOM II, Mario & Luigi, Rainbow Six 3*
Fave Genres: Action, Adventure, Shooting, RPG



JENNIFER TSAO, Managing Editor
Jennifer got so emotionally involved in her *Sim's* rock star past in *The Sims Bustin' Out* this month that she decided to bat on *EGM* and pursue her lounge-singer! dreams.
Now Playing: *Sims, Ray Hawk's Underground, Final Fantasy X-2*
Fave Genres: Johnny Dapp, Action Sports, Music, RPG



CRISPIN BOYER, Senior Editor
What does Crispin want for the holidays? Peace on earth? Meh. An end to world hunger? Whatever. *Super Grand Theft Meta! Gear 3: Snake Vs. Mario?* Now that's more like it!
Now Playing: *Armed & Dangerous, SOCOM II, Crimson Skies*
Fave Genres: Action, Adventure, RPG



CHRIS "DJ" JOHNSTON, News Editor
After taking a few years off, DJ finally dressed up for Halloween this year. His string out *Seabed 2021* Simulacra addict won't beat the ladies and fans w/ intelligent comedy.
Now Playing: *Crimson Skies, Mario Kart: Double Dash!!*
Fave Genres: Action, Adventure, Puzzle, Music



SHANE BETTENHAUSEN, Reviews Editor
Having finished *Final Fantasy X-2* (with the best ending). Shane openly admits that, yes, it's too early. But no, his prized replicas of Yuna's Tiny Bee guns are not cosplay accessories.
Now Playing: *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!, Final Fantasy X-2, Pac-Man vs. Fave Genres:* Action, RPG, Fighting, Karaoke



JOE FIELDER, Previews Editor
After recently acting as a zombie in an SF stage version of *King of the Kings*, Joe was left with an intense craving for both *Resident Evil Outbreak* and...mmm...brains.
Now Playing: *Rainbow Six 3, Goblin Commander*
Fave Genres: Action, Shooters, Strategy



DEMIAN LINN, Editor-at-Large
Lapping the Nürburgring track in *Project Gotham Racing 2* was more fun than when Demian did it for real in a 59 horsepower Opel Astra. Even a two day passed him then.
Now Playing: *RGR, SSX 3, Soul Collector II*
Fave Genres: Action, Hockey, Racing, Fighting



PAUL BYRNES, Associate Editor
Playing too much of *The Sims Bustin' Out* caused Paul to have a very vivid, creepy dream that he was a *Sim*. He has dreamed before of *Zelda*, *Quake*, and *StarCraft*. Seriously.
Now Playing: *SSX 3, Godswave: Harmony of Dissonance*
Fave Genres: Shooting, Fighting, Role-playing



BYRAN WITHNAR, Associate Editor
Reviewing all the college basketball games brought back fond memories of Bryan's days at UConn. He rolled with the tough crowd then to help hide his inner gear. It didn't work.
Now Playing: *Legacy of Kain Defiance, Mario Kart: Double Dash!!*
Fave Genres: Action, Adventure, Sports



SHAWN ELLIOTT, Associate Editor
Some mistaken reader sent Shawn this sports card, asking for an autograph. Sorry guy, but you must have known our Shawn stands a mere 6'3".
Now Playing: *SSX 3, Ninja Golden, Crimson Skies*
Fave Genres: Fighting, Shooters, Adventure, Racing

Guest Reviewers



JON DUDLAK
Long hours at the paper tube plant and longer hours reviewing *Twilight Crems* = Zombie Jon.



GREG FORD
Ford ponders life as a virtual sailor. Namely, where he can find a swanky *Sims* hot tub.



JOHN RICCIARDI
Ricciardi calls us from Japan several times a day to gossip about girls and games.



GREG STEWART
Stewart's been writing about games since the beginning of time—or at least the mid-'90s.



KEVIN GIFFORD
This picture not big enough for you? Then catch Kevin doing a review on 1UP.com.



PATRICK MAURO
Sylvestri radio guy yaced up his *Dunk Low* and reviewed college hoop games.



DANIEL SIEBERG
Part of the thrub-gaming edition, Sieberg hosts videogame Thursdays on CNN Headline News.

■ Like Santa Claus, *EGM* can't always do it alone. Each month, the enterprising editorial staffs of our sister gaming mags (and website) **XBOX NATION**, **GAMENOW**, **OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE**, **GMR**, and **1UP.COM** act the part of gleeful little devils.

The Contributors

- **Computer Gaming World** editor **JOHNNY LIU** fell over sideways in slow motion when we tapped him to pen our *Max Payne 2* preview....
- **Los Angeles-based writer JOHN M. BIGSON** makes you an instant expert on buying your own arcade machines....
- **EGM** alumna **SHAWN SMITH** couldn't stomp his line of plush toys in our holiday Buyer's guide, but you can keep his wares at www.showminis.com....
- **Make foot playing videogames professionally?** Regular contributor **SCOTT STEINBERG** investigates on page 68....
- **A veteran frontliner JUSTIN SWEET** gives you the skinny on the games you're starting for in *The Hot Fiv*....
- **CASEY LOE** chases down the forthcoming *Sonic Heroes* to see if Sega's mascot can still run with the big boys....
- **And HIGH MARRASO and DAVE SMITH** of *Ziff Davis*' new gaming site 1UP.com, contributed to this month's mammoth reviews archive.

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Letters

ranting, raving, and the mega man cheerleader squad

My left finger

I read your "Videogames are Bad for You...Videogames are Good for You" article in *EGM* #170 (page 68) and have something to add. In May of 1998, I slipped into my hand while operating a machine and tore through a tendon in my left middle finger. The doctors said it would take two years to regain the use of my finger and that I should use a stress ball for therapy. Instead, I went out and bought *Die Hard Trilogy* (PS1) and a lightgun and mastered it left-handed after about six months of dedication. Now my rehabilitated finger is stuck in a **** position to all videogame haters!

—Devin Vinters

We'll be contacting you shortly about pitching the made-for-TV movie. It's *Pac-Man* meets *My Left Foot*, but for Gen-Y!

Vivisection Sonic

The influence of the gaming industry has spread to the medical world. In my biology class, the professor told us that there in a panel involved in human development called Sonic Hedgehog—found on human chromosome seven, in case you were wondering—which functions as a regulator of human stem cells. The story of its discovery is supposedly linked to a marathon gaming session; maybe the researcher had some sort of dependency on *Sonic*.

—Tom Kelly

Emu attack

I loved your "Dr. Gamingstein" article [*EGM* #173, page 50]; it's amazing that someone can take that kind of talent and apply it to making handheld versions of the classic game systems that I grew up

with! On a similar note, many of the old classic games can now be played on Sega's Dreamcast. Since Dreamcast runs Windows CE, many of the Windows emulators that run Atari 2600, NES, SNES, Colecovision, Sega Master System, and Sega Genesis games have been translated to DC. If you can part with \$30 at your local used game store and learn a little about burning ISO discs (dcmulation.com is a good place to start), you too can play emulators on the Dreamcast system! Great article, and long live the classic consoles!

—Bryan Jensen

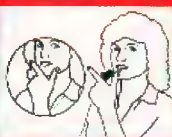
More pantaloons, please

I have been looking at games nowadays and have discovered something: There's no modesty. Videogame heroines don't seem to wear anything. Sure, I'm not complaining, but isn't it a little overboard? *Final Fantasy X-2*



■ **Sonic:** Game mascot by day, life-giving protein by night.

Letter of the month



Luigi's living a lie

I am profoundly deaf, and my main method of communication is American Sign Language (ASL). I bought *Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour* (GC) and have been playing it obsessively since July. I've noticed that each character has different actions and behaviors depending on how they score on a hole. One day, while playing Luigi, I noticed something bizarre. When he hit a birdie, he made the ASL sign for "lesbian."

—David Fulmer

We've always had our theories about Luigi...but not that one.

Congrats, David Fulmer! As our Letter of the Month winner, you've got a Nyko Air Flo EX Xbox controller coming your way. Keeps your hands cool, doesn't it? Because of the fans inside.

is a perfect example. I mean, would people actually go adventuring dressed up like that? In nearly every game I see, there's some half-naked guy. My point? The girls don't have to dress like sluts to make the game look good. *Final Fantasy* is already a perfect series. So, ladies...pants?

—Sean Maloney

You are too complaining. Do you think *Tomb Raider* would have limped to its sixth iteration if Lara wore a mummum? You don't have to love the hot pants, but you do have to live with them. It could be worse.

In my day, we walked

Having just turned 16, I started reading "Child's Play" [*EGM* #172, page 50] with the hope that the kids would

appreciate—at least somewhat—the old games you made them play. I didn't grow up with console systems in my household (my parents didn't think it was "right" for an 11-year-old girl to be playing videogames), but the arcades I visited were stocked with old-time classics. My friends and I would drop so much money on *Donkey Kong* that we should have just bought an arcade cabinet instead, and *Pac-Man* and *Space Invaders* filled the free time I had while they took their turns at being the "Jumpman." And *Super Mario Bros.* —▶

unedited letters



■ **Capshun:** Luc Skywalker bullseyes wimprats on tatooon.

Orange frigit

I'd like to ask you something y do you keep changing staff and y do people always argue about which games better I mean ain't saying you cant have one but you could at least think they have to say oh my every one else must like this game no matter what. why just a month a go I bought rouge sarden 2 and I hated it was to short and difficult like the orange targets r suppose be the ones to hit I was playing this 1 mission and killed all the orange and the purple targets kept attacking the frigit and I FAILUD the MISSION. and email me back your answer.

—scott a duprie

Do a search for "Rouge Squadron" on Google and you'll get 31,600 hits. That's a whole lot of people who don't know how to spell "rogue."

CONTACT EGM

Feel like there are some things you need to get off your chest vis-à-vis your ideas for the next *Final Fantasy*, or perhaps you have a personal message for *Metal Gear* creator Hideo Kojima? Hit EGM@ziffdavis.com or write to:

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simple, but so addictive. That was my crack during sixth grade. Those kinds of games made me look past the shoddy graphics of my first system, a Nintendo 64, and play through some awesome games when the Sony kids in my neighborhood would give up halfway through. Even now, most people can't look past the graphics of a game, which is unfortunate. I'll give the kids *E.T.*, though.

—Jackie Sheridan

Stickin' it to AI

In *EGM* #173, I noticed a disturbingly dumb letter written by Al Lica, who was upset with your "Child's Play" article and said that "12-year-old kids do not know who Zeus is." I can't speak for the kids Al hangs out with, but most 12-year-olds I know go to school, and when I was 11, everyone in my entire grade learned who Zeus was. It really annoys me when older people think young people don't know anything.

—Sean Murphy

Notes from the Big House

What's up guys, my (nick)name in Scorpio. I'm incarcerated for armed robbery. Sure, I played *Grand Theft Auto* and listened to Bone Thugs-N-Harmony, but do I blame them for my actions? No! I did it; it was my fault, nobody else's! To all those wannabe tough guys who get caught and think, "Hm, I'll blame this on *Grand Theft*

Auto, *Doom*, *Mortal Kombat*, and *The Matrix*," stop being such a b**** and take responsibility for your own actions. People have to quit looking for scapegoats and large amounts of money and realize the difference between an analog controller and a nickel-plated semiautomatic handgun. I believe that those who sue the videogame and music industries aren't going to be happy until the only game we have is Pong and the only music is Mozart's greatest hits.

—Scorpio

Yikes.



■ BGG&E's Übermensch Jade klicking ass.

God is dead

I read the review for *Beyond Good and Evil* in *EGM* #173, and it sounds awesome. I was just wondering when Ubisoft plans to make the sequel, *Twilight of the Idols*. I'm quite sure it won't be called *The Gay Science* or *The Anti-Christ*. Also, I was wondering what kind of royalties dead philosophers get for having their titles ripped off.

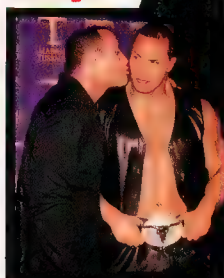
—Brandon Crary

For those of you currently thinking, "Wha?"

Beyond Good and Evil is the

title of a book by 19th-century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, which is *Twilight of the Idols*, *The Gay Science*, and *The Anti-Christ*. Yet more proof that a joke isn't funny if you have to explain it. >

sputtering outrage



■ The Rock plants a wet one on Madam Tussaud's wax version of The Rock.

Not that there's anything wrong with that

All right you guys (and girls), I love *EGM* and I think you are the funniest bunch around, but where do you get off calling *The Rock* a queer in the review of *WWE Wrestlemania XIX* [*EGM* #172, page 198]? In an image at the top, he is taunting Undertaker, and you say he is inviting Taker to be on *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*? It is an outrage! He is a very successful athlete, and I would like it if you didn't damage his character! Other than that you are the best!

—Ben Reit

The man's got a certain flair, that's all we're saying. He knows how to tizze an elbow pad.



GAME DESIGN-O-RAMA

Keep those game ideas comin' to EGM@ziffdavis.com, subject: design-o-rama.



COW TIPPING

In *Cow Tipping*, you play a radneck and drive around looking for a field full of cows, while hitting mailboxes and shooting street signs for bonus points. The actual cow tipping is in first person. You'll also have to avoid angry farmers, rabid cows, and cowpigs. Missions can get tough; you may have to tip cows in broad daylight, play as a one-legged radneck, or even produce a fresh glass of milk before you commence to tippin'.

—Bruce Ridilla

I HAVE A DREAM



RESIDENT EVIL: I HAVE A DREAM

The zombies here are fraternizing, asking the deep questions: Why are we here? What is our purpose? And most important, where are our rights? In *Resident Evil: I Have a Dream*, you play as a group of zombies fighting for freedom and respect. No more being shot on sight! Freedom to moan! Undead suffrage! Run protests and rallies to get support, be a guest on talk shows, teach your half-eaten Doberman some tricks!

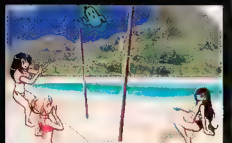
—Javier Ortega



WRESTLEMANIA

Can you smell what The Rock is cookin'? It's a fresh can of whoop ass. After wandering in the desert aimlessly since *The Scorpion King*, The Rock stumbles across Dracula's castle, where the dark lord and the Belmont clan have decided to hold a wrestling grudge match to settle their disputes. Face off in a freak show of unholy proportions! Several wrestling stars also show up to take part in the battle for no apparent reason.

—Noah Needleman



FINAL FANTASY X-TREME BEACH VOLLEYBALL

Who hasn't wanted to see the girls of *Final Fantasy* scantily clad in sexy swimsuits and thongs? Now you can, with *Final Fantasy X-treme Beach Volleyball*! Ogle such hotties as Yuna, Rikku, Tifa, and Rinoa, but instead of a sissy volleyball, our babes will be spiking a cactus at each other's faces. Give the gals fun gifts, like a new sword, cuddly chocobo, or baby-oil rubdown. No men.

—Josh Taylor



ORBITAL HOPS. VIBRI AT NIKEAIR.MAX



> Gaming for cheapasses

I just finished reading your "Power Shopping" article, thinking I could pick up a few tips for saving money. I didn't; most of the gamers who read this mag probably know about preorder deals, trade-ins, buying used, and checking the bargain bin. They may not, however, know of websites like cheapassgamer.com, fatwallet.com, and videogamedeals.com—in the last couple months, I've scored *Skies of Arcadia Legends* (GC) and *Panzer Dragoon Orta* (Xbox) for \$10 each, *Rygar* (PS2) for \$5, *Tiger Woods 2004* (GC version) preorder for \$20, and many, many more. If you're tight with your gaming cash, it's the only way to go.

—Walt Rogers

Top tips

Thank you for the excellent "Power Shopping" article in *EGM* #173 (page 63). As one who has been a bargain hunter for even longer than I was a gamer, I thought some of my fellow *EGM*ers might benefit from some additional shopping tips I've gleaned over the years.

Many chain stores will match the price in any competitor's ad. This is especially helpful if the store that advertised Game X at that fantastically low price sold out in 10 seconds flat; most people won't think of running to another store and getting a price match. You'll have better luck getting price matches at bigger places like Best Buy and Circuit City than at your local gaming-only shop. Most of the best prices are seen around Christmas (and especially right after), as retailers try to clear old or undersold merchandise from their shelves. Role-playing games and niche titles tend to retain their value for a long time, though, so if your heart's set on one of those, just get it instead of waiting six months, hoping for a \$10 price drop that never comes (or worse, having it disappear from store shelves altogether).

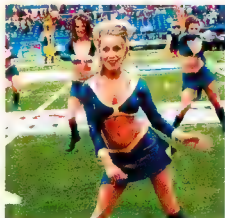
If you know you are going to want a strategy guide for a given game, you should probably buy the book right away, then try to save a few dollars on the game itself later on, because guides have a much shorter shelf life (though online retailers hang on to them longer than regular stores). Amazon.com often has good discounts on strategy guides, especially if you order enough at one time to qualify for free shipping. Sometimes, you don't have to shell out any cash at all; Prima offers completely free online "Fast Track Guides" for older games right at its website, primagames.com. And if you don't mind wading through lots of plain old text, gamefaqs.com is the most comprehensive collection of strategies for games anywhere.



■ Power-shopping Identical twins Mill (purple) and Tilt (white) are not gonna pay full price for this muffler.

Hope this helps a few gamers save some bucks for other necessities, like food, shelter, and *EGM* subscriptions!

—John Cimbaro



B-O-M-B-E-R-S!

I live in Winnipeg, Manitoba. In our fair city, we love videogames so much that we passed a law to change the name of our local football team. We voted to rename our team in honor of Mega Man—since he is celebrating a significant anniversary this year. Feast your eyes on our very own Winnipeg Blue Bombers! We've got a logo, cheerleaders, and everything! Just figured you guys would take joy in knowing that we love our games as much as you do!

OK, not really. It's all just a coincidence. Our football team has been around for

over 50 years and is the pride of the city. But I figured you'd probably like to look at the cheerleaders.

—Ricardo Martinez

We're so predictable. See more at www.bluebombers.com.

Big money, big prizes

In your "How to Build a Home Arcade" article (*EGM* #172, page 54) you left out a product that blows away the three arcade sticks you reviewed. The SilkStik (www.silkstik.com) line of arcade controllers is simply amazing. Just being able to play two-player *Smash TV* and *Karate Champ* in full twin-stick glory is worth the price.

—Edmond Navarro

The SilkStik may well blow away the sticks we mentioned, what with the optional trackball and *Tempest*-style spinner. And it'd be better, considering it'll run you in the neighborhood of \$590. Not all of our readers answer to the name Richie Rich. 🍀



■ The \$590 SilkStik CO2, the gold-plated Cadillac of arcade sticks.

word on the street

■ HAVE YOU EVER BOUGHT A GAME BASED ON A REVIEW... AND ENDED UP HATING IT?



Halo. It was hyped through the roof as a must-have, and while I enjoy a good first-person shooter, this one was rather...meh. Not a bad game by any means, but it just didn't impress me, and I traded it in three days later after solving the Legendary mode.

—Ray Boeckman



I bought *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* based mainly on hype and excellent reviews, but was not pleased at all. Sailing sucks. I now officially hate the ocean and boats. And no, the *Ballad of Gales* doesn't help enough to change my opinion.

—Caleb Alesi



I hated *Mario Party* back in the Nintendo 64 era. I ran out with about a month's pay for it, brought it home, and played it for an hour. Now it's in my "games to be used for drink coasters" collection.

—Andrew Barker



I got a Sega 32X when that travesty (shut up, I know) I read a positively glowing review for *Cosmic Carnage*, since the game was already on shelves, I picked it up. That fighter was a big load of crap—I think it scored 4s and 4s out of 10. In the next issue.

—Justin Buehner



Uh, yeah—*Soul Calibur II*. I feel that a lot of superhyped games get a little more than they deserve, storewise. *Bomberman* also got good reviews from some magazine, but I played it for an hour and decided it sucked.

—Douglas De Guzman

■ If you'd like to participate in word on the Street, check our response boards at www.egmmag.com.

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PLAY IT AGAIN, SAM

Superspy Sam Fisher explores his options in **Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow**

What does the 1995 film *Batman Forever* have in common with *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow*? If the developers at Ubisoft have their way, nothing at all.

"[For *Splinter Cell*], I want to have a universe that builds on itself," says scriptwriter J. T. Petty, "that evolves, that grows naturally. So none of the sequels feel like the Val Kilmer *Batman* [movie]—sequels shouldn't just recycle what was good, but actually grow on the world."

In other words, the idea for the stealth espionage follow-up, due in March for all three major systems, isn't radical change—after all, the first *Cell* must've done something right to sell over four million copies. Instead, the focus is on "changing little things, simple things," as Associate Producer Julian Gerigthy puts it, "that will [still] have a significant impact."

Take the original *Cell*'s convoluted plot. Was Dougherty the guy you found dying or the guy you were supposed to kill? And Masse—he was that dude who was going to double-cross Blaustein, right? Wait, who was Blaustein again?

"Things got so complex," admits Petty, "that sometimes you didn't know exactly why a mission was happening. With *Pandora*, I was careful to craft a story where every moment you know what you have to do—and why."

Other tweaks include a modified version of the infamous split-jump that's actually useful (it'll help Sam get up to out-of-reach ledges) and a revamped alarm system. "In the first game, if you were spotted three times, [the level ended]," says Gerigthy. "Now we have alert stages. If a guard sees some movement or finds a dead body, they'll get more aggressive—they'll pay more attention to their surroundings. Second alarm stage, they go and put on flak jackets. Third stage, on goes the Keivar helmet as well.

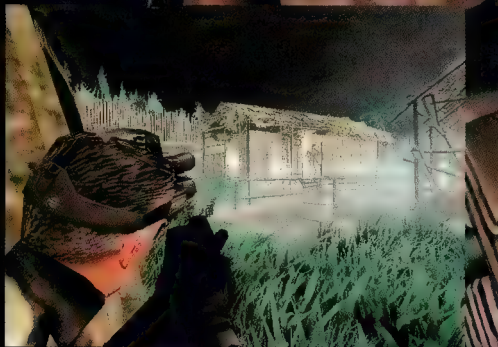


■ Facial hair hi-scope headset, large gun—yup, that's Sam alright.

If you wanna go in all guns blazing, you can, but it makes it that much harder."

Which brings us to *Pandora*'s most exciting addition: choice. One of the main complaints Ubisoft heard about the first *Splinter Cell* was that it felt linear; players could use any number of methods to take out bad guys—distract them, hide in the shadows, shoot 'em—but there was always only one path to completing a mission. Not so in *Pandora Tomorrow*. Check out the example on the next page.

—Mark MacDonald

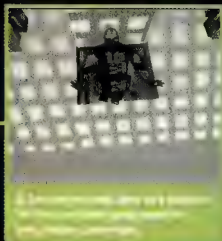


THE SIXTH FREEDOM: FREEDOM OF CHOICE

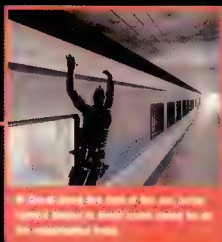


■ Sam's on the tail of a group of terrorists traveling aboard a train speeding through France. He's safe in the storage cab now, but he needs to make it past the next car filled with bad guys and innocent passengers without being seen or anyone getting hurt. You've got four options; the game doesn't score you based on which one you choose, but we will—choose a path and flip the page to be judged.

1 PATH 1: UNDER



2 PATH 2: BESIDE



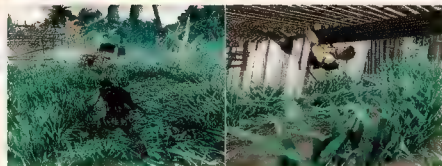
1 PATH 3: THROUGH



1 PATH 4: OVER



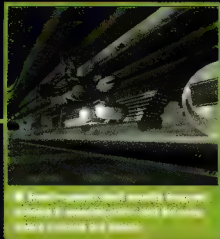
sensory overload



No longer confined to dark corridors, Sam gets to breathe a little fresh air in some of *Pandora Tomorrow's* outdoor missions. Take the jungle environment in these screenshots. "In this level," says Associate Producer Julian Gerigthy, "Sam has just been dropped off outside an Indonesian encampment, and he has a very tight time frame. He needs to infiltrate and get out before sunrise."

In motion, this wilderness setting is stunning, with thousands of strands of tall grass swaying in the wind and wild birds scattering as Sam approaches. But that's not all you can stumble upon in the brush. "At certain points, you might feel a slight vibration," says Gerigthy. "If you ignore that vibration and keep on walking, BAM! Booby trap. You're dead, back to square one. We're playing around with things that will have no visual cues. We like to call it sensory gameplay." So you might want to think twice before you turn Vibration off in the Options menu.

FREEDOM OF CHOICE:



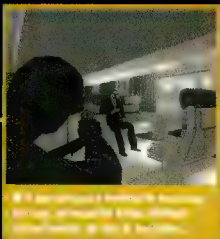
1 PATH 1:
UNDER

■ These guard-dogged areas are great for sneaking through. But they're also great for taking cover and aiming.



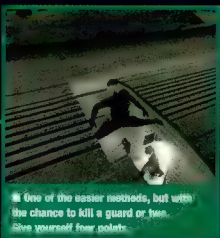
2 PATH 2:
BESIDE

■ Watch those windows—if you or your shadow are spotted, people will panic. A tricky but clever method. 100 points.



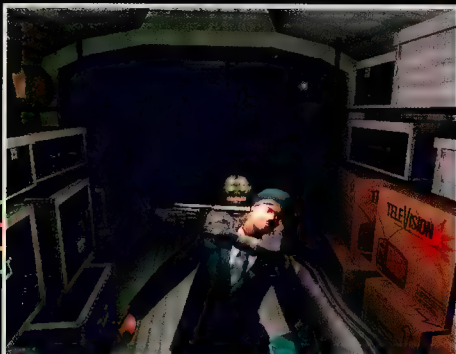
3 PATH 3:
THROUGH

■ It's an unusual technique, but you can sneak through the guard's blind spot. 100 points.



4 PATH 4:
OVER

■ One of the easier methods, but with the chance to kill a guard or two. Give yourself four points.



■ You made it! Now grade yourself on the following scale: Two points—wuss. Four points—average. Six points—stealthy stud. Ten points—one bad mother-shut-your-mouth!

the all-new online mode



■ This isn't the standard deathmatch game.

Thought the online mode added for *Pandora Tomorrow* (for PS2 and Xbox as well, GameCUBE is iffy) would be your standard deathmatch afterthought? Think again.

Here's the setup: You have two teams. One side controls spies; their objective is to infiltrate a facility and gain access to certain strategic spots (like a computer they can hack into). The other side, playing as mercenaries, tries to stop them. Which is where *Pandora Tomorrow*'s online game stops sounding like a fancy version of *Capture the Flag* and starts to get interesting.

The two sides play completely differently. For example, the spies have no real weapons. They have sticky shockers, which can incapacitate a target for a few moments, but the only way spies can kill anyone is to sneak up from behind and break their neck. In order to survive, they have to rely on stealth and gadgetry, just like in *Cell*'s single-player game: stick to shadows, climb along ledges and rooftops, use thermal and low-light goggles to keep out of sight. The mercenaries, on the other hand, do have guns. Big guns. With zoom scopes and grenade launchers. They also have gadgetry of their own—laser tripwires, motion-detecting goggles, flashlights, and more.

It's less a firefight and more a game of hide-and-seek. Other factors emphasize this cat-and-mouse gameplay; the spies use the standard *Splinter Cell* third-person viewpoint to see around them (so they can effectively climb on stuff and stay in the dark), while the mercenaries are set to a more immersive (but also limiting) first-person view. Also, the game is currently limited to four players to slow the action down to a more deliberate pace (it's up to players if they want to try 2-on-2 or 3-on-1).



■ The design for the mercenaries is more of a placeholder.

Bust it UP!

CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON

Homing Fur Ball or Radioactive Rabbit? Choose your weapon wisely, or you will be forever subjected to a life of twisted animal testing. Shackled together, Spanky must use the indestructible Redmond as a weapon and tool for escape from an evil lab.

• Homing Fur Ball

• Bunny Grinder

• Radioactive Rabbit

• Bunny Fuse

BUNNY CANNON

• Hare-side

• Electro Static Rabbit

• Hungry Bunny

• Hare Clog

HELIUM BUNNY

• Tug-O-Rabbit

• 10 Ton Bunny

• Bunny Cannon

• Helium Bunny

HARE CLOG

• Hyper-Hare

• Stuffed Rabbit

• Chocolate Bunny

Whiplash

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WhiplashGame.com

Demolish everything from security cameras to test equipment.

Dip Redmond in toxic waste to poison enemies, electro-charge him to zap attackers and more!

Knock out the evil lab staff with loads of combo attacks.



PlayStation 2



Mild Violence
Comic Mischief

THAT KONGA FEELING

Nintendo's **Donkey Konga** lets you bang on the drum all day

Nintendo is looking to capture the hearts of professional and casual bongo players across Japan with its newest Cube title, *Donkey Konga*. Co-developed by Namco, *Konga* (which hits stores December 12) is actually a rip-off of Namco's own *Taiko no Tatsujin*, a Japanese taiko-drum arcade game so popular that it's already spawned two PS2 sequels since it was first released in late 2002. Like *Taiko*, *Konga* uses a special drum controller (pictured above) but unlike that game, this can be played by up to four players simultaneously. That's a lot of drum-beatin'.

Here's the deal: You hit the appropriate bongo along with the music as colored "notes" land at the far left of the screen (think *Dance Dance Revolution* tipped on its side). The more accurate the hit, the more points you'll rack up. Miss a beat or hit the drum at the wrong time and your score will take a dive. Occasionally, you'll even be required to clap instead of striking the drum (your hits are picked up by



the drum controller's microphone).

The song selection is a varied mix of enough game, anime, Japanese pop tunes, and TV themes to send the island nation into a frenzy. Among these infectious ditties are the *Super Mario Bros.* theme, the opening song from the latest *Pokémon* animated TV show, and Brahms' "Hungarian Dance."

Nintendo won't comment on a U.S. release of *Konga*, but its heavily Japanese-language song list means it would have to undergo some extensive localization before crossing the Pacific.



Konga's minigames will entertain you when you're not jammin' on the skins.



GRUDGE MATCH

Two fanboy favorites step in the ring



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS - LORD OF THE RINGS

Put on your +3 Mail of Wisdom and tear off a hunk of Lembas bread, 'cause we're pittin' these two geek-tested, dork-approved game/movie series against each other, wizards-and-warriors style!

AT THE MOVIES



Knock-off mimics superior, less-Marlon-Wayans-employing action flicks

Classic story retold by Hollywood's hottest stars and Liv Tyler
Advantage: LOTR



OPPOSITE-SEX APPEAL

Alas, there's just nothing attractive about a clutch of sweaty dudes in their parents' basement rolling dice to determine what pretend-happens next

Offer up Orlando Bloom in tights as an excuse for her to see the movie with you
Advantage: LOTR

MOST IMPRESSIVE VIDEOGAME OUTING



PS2's incredible *Baldur's Gate*
Advantage: D&D

PS2's commendable *Return of the King*

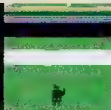


MOST EMBARRASSING VIDEOGAME OUTING

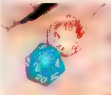


NES's *AD&D: Heroes of the Lance*, featuring blocky-durable dwarves
Advantage: D&D

Atari 2600's *LOTR: Journey to Rivendell*, featuring blocky representations of Middle-earth's finest

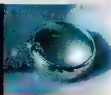


FATE OF THE WORLD DEPENDS ON



A 20-sided die

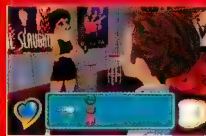
A little guy with a ring
Advantage: LOTR
(The odds do work out a little better)



WINNER: LORD OF THE RINGS

Turns out you should have been Gandalf! Instead of that Dwarfven Spell Ferges on Halloween (but bring that *DM Guide* to the *ROTK* screening anyway).

TIDBITS THAT DON'T GO TOGETHER LIKE PEANUT BUTTER AND CHOCOLATE



Larry approaches a lonely lass.

Larry Strikes Again

In the late '80s, the *Leisure Suit Larry* series put PC gamers in the role of a loveable loser looking for love in all the wrong places. In late 2004, the series will return to the PC and consoles in *Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude*, a new title starring Larry Lovage, the illustrious nephew of the original Larry.



Fans Do What Nintan-won't

Industrious fans are pulling Nintendo over the Info Superhighway whether the company wants to be there or not. The Warp Pipe Project, a fan-built PC app, tricks LAN-enabled GC titles like *Kirby Air Ride* and *Mario Kart Double Dash* into playing over the Net. Info at www.warppipe.com.

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PlayStation 2



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HOW TO HUNT MAN

Rockstar's **Manhunt** brings new levels of violence to stealth-action gaming. How will you survive the hunt?

Man hunting man. It's been the theme of many a cinematic classic, such as *The Running Man* and *Surviving the Game* (starring master thespians Arnold Schwarzenegger and Ice-T, respectively). Now, it's the subject of Rockstar's latest foray into the controversial world of mature gaming. *Manhunt* for PS2 should be out by the time you read this, and if you're still in the dark about this gruesome and violent stealth-action game, keep read-

ing to see what the kids *shouldn't* be playing this holiday season.

You play a death-row inmate scheduled to receive a lethal injection, but instead of your eternal rest, you wake up to find yourself as the star of some sick film director's pet project. He's bribed local authorities to section off a seedy part of Career City to use as his personal film set—only this urban playground is peppered with the most heartless, violent gangsters this side of Compton,

all out to kill you. The point? It's hunt or be hunted, and while you're trying to make it out alive by any means necessary, the director's gonna catch it all on film. It's a twisted tale brewed from twisted sources. "Ancillary influences include all sorts of popular culture," says Lead Producer Andy Hay, "like *Marathon Man*, *Jacob's Ladder*, *BMM*, *Romper Stomper*, and reality TV." Hey, Hay: Don't forget *Arnie's The Running Man!*

The action is similar to other stealth

games like *Splinter Cell*, sans the guns and high-tech gadgets. "We've created a sense of terror by making the player relatively weak, forced to run and hide from the hunters," says Hay. But don't be scared—*EGM* is here to help. We dusted off this old hunting guide to give you an idea of how the gameplay will work. Use it wisely, and you just may live long enough to find out why you're in this mess to begin with.

—Dan "Shoe" Hsu



STAY HIDDEN

Splinter Cell's stealthy Sam Fisher taught us to always bet on black, and the same philosophy applies here. Keep to the dark, shadowy areas (or hide around corners), and the shortsighted gangsters won't know where to stick that meat cleaver.



KEEP QUIET

You can't go for stealth kills if you're prancing around the levels like a bat out of inner-city hell. Tiptoe a lot (and don't run unless you really have to), avoid noisy surfaces, and don't accidentally knock over that metal garbage can.



WATCH THE RADAR

Like in Konami's *Metal Gear Solid* games, a radar tells you where the bad guys are. It doesn't show how far they can see, but it does display sound. Make some noise, and a red circle will pulse out—if it reaches the enemies on your radar, you know your TV career's about to come to an end. Run and hide!



KILL SILENTLY

Like a homicidal MacGyver, you can pick up common everyday objects and use them to kill. See that plastic bag? Sneak up behind a hunter and quietly strangle him with it so you don't alert his buddies. You can also pick up enemy weapons—"everything from machetes to nail guns," says Hay.



KONAMI

© 1996 KAZUKI TAKAHASHI

Trapped in a Virtual Reality World!



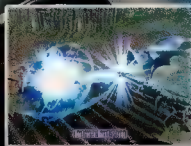
Two heroes in two different stories, play as Yugi or Kaiba to escape the VR world!



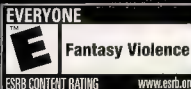
The Egyptian God Monsters await within The Kingdom!



Real-time strategic action combined with 3-on-3 monster battles!



Monsters get stronger with battle and learn awesome special and combination attacks!



INSTANT EXPERT: BUY A COIN-OP

A no-fuss guide to nabbing an arcade machine



■ Wonder years: The glory days of the local game room may lie gone forever—so why not relive them at home, without all the greasy teens?

It's every gamer's dream to bring home the arcade experience, but just like earning a top score in *Pac-Man*, coin-op shopping needs a plan of attack. Here's yours:

Where the coin-ops dwell...

You can follow three paths when stalking your coin-op. Each varies in convenience, selection, and average cost per machine.

Net auctions

Price range: \$200-\$1,200

Arcade dealers sell on eBay, but they'll hit you with massive freight costs, and you'll often have to pick up the unit at your airport's shipping-receiving bay.



■ See the burn: Before you buy, check the screen for burned-in images.

Live auctions

Price range: \$25-\$2,500

Companies such as Super Auctions (www.superauctions.com) and U.S. Amusement Auctions (www.usamusement.com) tour the United States weekly and are a great way to score cheap units. Because these outfits often buy coin-ops in bulk from bankrupt amusement parks, repairs and replacement parts are often required.

Local dealers

Price range: \$800-\$4,000

While you'll drop the most cash at a nearby dealer, it's typically worth the extra expense. These mom-and-pop setups usually sell like-new refurbished units, so you don't have to worry about repairs. Check under "Amusements" in your local Yellow Pages. Scan the used-arcade-game section of www.namcoarcade.com to see if any Namco game rooms are selling coin-ops in your neighborhood.

You be JAMMA'in'

If you lack cash and crave a lot of games, you're best off buying arcade boards on eBay or at online specialists like www.videoconnect.com and www.gwtrading.com. These clunky mounds of microchips can run as little as \$10. You'll just need a cabinet compatible with JAMMA—the interface standard for most arcade games.

Or, if you don't need the full-cabinet experience, get a SuperGun (aka SuperNova) or similar JAMMA kit that connects arcade boards right to your television. They run between \$200 and \$300 at sites like www.massystems.com or www.gwtrading.com. These kits aren't as impressive as full-scale coin-ops, but at least you'll have room in your apartment for furniture.

—Jon M. Gibson

OLD SCHOOL 10 years ago in EGM

■ On the Cover: Mortal Kombat II

Many a fan's favorite installment of the *Mortal Kombat* series landed this month, with a fatality/move list inside for the (at the time) brand-new arcade game.



Game of the Month: Mega Man X (SNES)

Capcom's first 16-bit *Mega Man* title, the first entry in the X series, garnered top praise from our Review Crew this month, scoring four nines (out of 10). Crew vet Ed Semrad declared, "The action and graphics are superb." Believe it!



■ The PC Engine FX



The Engine That Couldn't

The first specs and release details on NEC's PC Engine FX and Sony's PS-X (aka PlayStation) were revealed in this issue. We now know which system triumphed and which failed miserably due to a glut of anime dating sims instead of real games, but back then, anything seemed possible.

The Joy of Six

Fans of Sega's Genesis had struggled with just three buttons for long enough! Ten years ago, the company released a six-button controller in pad and joystick flavors, perfect for fighting games that required more buttons to tap.



BY THE NUMBERS

Stats that'll make your head spin

400

Estimated number of N-Gages Nokia says it sold to retailers worldwide in the system's first few weeks of launch.

5

Number of N-Gages market-watcher Arcade Research estimates were actually sold to U.S. consumers during those first weeks.

0%

Change in the system's list of a long, fruitful life.

\$12

Budget for *The House of the Dead* movie, a flick that shares the name of and is based on Sega's popular arcade/console shooters.

\$5.7

The film's box-office gross its first weekend, landing it at No. 6 on the box-office chart—well below space-dog flick *Good Boy*.

1

Number of positive reviews (out of 36 total) on movie opinion site rottentomatoes.com.

0%

Chance a sequel will be made.

Achtung!

Hauptmann - Ihr Flugzeug brennt*



* (Translation: Hey, Captain! Your airplane's on fire.)

The fortunes of German pilots everywhere are about to take a severe downturn. In this intense WWII flight-action game, from Secret Weapons of Luftwaffe®, TIE-Fighter®, and X-Wing® creator Lawrence Holland, you'll join a secret, elite fighter squadron. Your mission: thwart the most insidious plans of the Third Reich. Over Europe and other theaters, you'll pilot nearly two dozen authentic aircraft, and face over 30 air-to-air and air-to-ground combat scenarios. And you won't need any flight training. Just nerves of steel, a steady hand, and a burning desire to rid the world of tyranny, one mission at a time.

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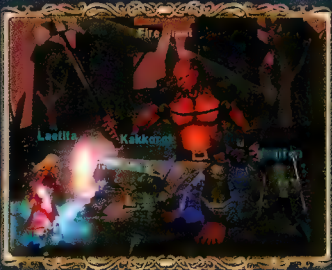
EVERQUEST ONLINE ADVENTURES FRONTIERS



Battle fierce dragons with a new playable race, the Ogre.



Power your character all the way up to level 60.



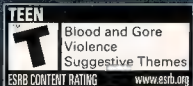
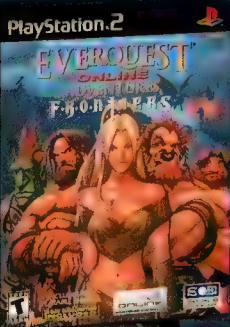
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Game Experience May
Change During Online Play

INTERNET CONNECTION REQUIRED
ADDITIONAL SUBSCRIPTION FEES REQUIRED

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Conquer New Frontiers Online!

Heroes of a past age join the next generation of
adventurers to conquer new Frontiers.



PlayStation 2



REC

THEY JUST KILLED CASH.
NOW THEY WANT TO KILL HIM AGAIN.

AMERICA IS FULL OF RUN DOWN, BROKEN RUST-BELT TOWNS WHERE NOBODY CARES AND ANYTHING GOES.

IN CARCER CITY, NOTHING MATTERS ANYMORE AND ALL THAT'S LEFT ARE CHEAP THRILLS.

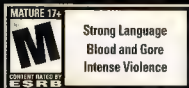
THE ULTIMATE RUSH IS THE POWER TO GRANT LIFE AND TAKE IT AWAY, FOR SPORT. THIS TIME JAMES EARL CASH, YOU ARE THE SPORT.
THEY GAVE YOU YOUR LIFE BACK. NOW, THEY ARE GOING TO HUNT YOU DOWN.

YOU AWAKE TO THE SOUND OF YOUR OWN PANICKED BREATH.

YOU MUST RUN, HIDE AND FIGHT TO SURVIVE.

IF YOU CAN STAY ALIVE LONG ENOUGH, YOU MAY FIND OUT WHO DID THIS TO YOU.

THE FINAL CUT IN STORES NOW!



PlayStation 2

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REC →
SAVE ←

MANHUNT



WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/MANHUNT



Note: Rockstar will be following ESRB guidelines for all rated games in the marketing of this game. This game contains violent language and behavior and may not be appropriate for persons under the age of 17. The story, names and incidental portrayed herein are fictional and bear no resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or to actual events to be inferred or should be inferred. Any resemblance is coincidental. The makers and publishers of this videogame do not in any way endorse, condone or encourage this kind of behavior.

AFTERTHOUGHTS: RETURN OF THE KING

An inside look at the creation of the one game made to rule them all

Between the two *Lord of the Rings* games (last year's *The Two Towers* and the recently released *Return of the King*), it seems like Electronic Arts wants to ruin all of your preconceived notions about licensed games. You know, the ones about them all sucking? We spoke with Executive Producer Neal Young about the making of *Return of the King* in an effort to find out what exactly makes EA's *Lord of the Rings* game franchise so bright, so beautiful, so...precioussss....

EGM: For what kind of gaming audience did you design *Return of the King*? We ask because it's a pretty damn difficult game.

Neal Young: We made it for the mainstream. But my personal belief is that the mainstream is a gamer audience. [I don't think there's] much delineation [between them]. I can't remember a time when there wasn't a game machine in my house, so I'd consider myself to be a gamer. I don't play 20 hours a week; I play outside of my job, maybe two to four hours a week. We ultimately built it for us, the types of players that we are, because we feel that we're representative of gamers out there.

Buried Treasure

Return of the King is rife with unlockable extras, from extra playable characters and bonus levels to interviews with the actors from the film. For instance, once you beat the game, you can then play any stage as any character; heroes Merry, Pippin, and Faramir become available; and an endurance challenge opens up. But what else is hidden inside? We asked Executive Producer Neal Young if, say, a playable Gollum might exist in the game, but he only gave us a tantalizing, "You know, I don't think I can comment on that!"



EGM: It's got some really tough spots, though! Like defending Minas Tirith.
NY: Yeah, there are key moments in a game that you want to make challenging. If you don't have those, you run the risk of allowing users to blow through [it in only a few days]. We shouldn't build games that are unnecessarily difficult or frustrating, though. The way we compensated for that in *Return of the King* was by offering different paths, so [if people got stuck they] could go onto one of the other three paths.

EGM: Were there any ground rules from New Line Cinema as far as what you could or couldn't do in the game?

NY: There weren't ground rules per se. It was important for everyone to have something that wasn't rubbish, and the filmmakers had a lot of faith in us so we had a lot of freedom. [We met with movie director Peter Jackson] several times and he gave us a lot of insight into where the film was going, and that [allowed us] to make sure the game was consistent with where he was taking [the films].

EGM: Were there any level ideas that weren't possible for some reason or couldn't make it into the game?

NY: Oh, yeah! There were a lot. When we started, the level count was around 22, and we ended up with about 14, including [unlockable stages]. [Some of the levels] didn't really fit into the framework.

EGM: Oh, now you've piqued our curiosity. You can't tease like that and not tell us, so...what were some of the cut levels like?

NY: We had a vertical-ascend level with Frodo, Sam, and Gollum climbing away from the Witch King. But we felt like it might end up feeling like a gimmicky bonus level. Helm's Deep was originally two levels; the first half you played as Aragorn, and the second half you played as Gandalf. We cut that idea to really focus on Gandalf, because I wanted the



That's a 7,000-year-old case of yikes! As he's stomping up there.



I'm not a diva, but I play one on TV.



▶ Check out an extended version of our *Return of the King* Afterthoughts interview at extra.egmmag.com.

■ ¿Quién es más macho? ¿Samwise o Frodo? ¿Samwise es más macho!

“[The next game] is going to be the next evolution in action-adventure titles.”

—Return of the King Executive Producer Neal Young

▶ first thing that you saw in *Return of the King* to be different than what you saw in *The Two Towers*.

There was a battle with Saruman at Orthanc, which we [didn't have time to put in, and] an ascent to Mount Doom. We just couldn't figure out a compelling game mechanic for that level other than “all stealth, all the time,” and at the end of the day, that felt like something that wouldn't fit with the core gameplay.

There was a level that we called “Minas Tirith Clean-up” that we didn't even start on. It took place after the battle of Pelennor Fields. As the army of the dead [appears], Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli were to enter Minas Tirith and deal with all the leftover orcs, Uruk-Hai, trolls, and wargs. And originally the first half of the Witch King battle had Gandalf fighting him. I cut that because the design just wasn't working.

EGM: What are the best upgrades you can get in the game?

NY: The Orc Haver is the first upgrade that you can get, and it's actually very good to have. You can buy time extensions to your character's special abilities, and the most valuable of those is Gandalf's “Super Monkey Ball” shield, as we call it [Editor's Note: the shield forms a spherical spell around the character, protecting you and damaging enemies]. Legolas has a two-shot mithril arrow upgrade, which fires two shots at the same time and allows you to shoot

through characters [and hit foes behind them] since it's mithril. And Aragorn has an upgrade that sets enemies on fire and shoots fireballs in eight directions.

EGM: All right, one last thing. Finish this joke for us: “So, a dwarf, human, and elf walk into a bar...”

NY: OK...so the barman says to Aragorn, “What can I get for you...your short friend...and the lady?”

EGM: Thank you very much, folks. He'll be here all week. Neal Young, everybody! [Applause]. ✨ —Joe Fielder

▶ Prove that the Samwings really does exist by setting it on fire.



The Return of the Ring

Now that *Return of the Ring* is out, you might guess that'd be the end of *Lord of the Rings* games. Not so, mein freund. In fact, a new game—currently entitled *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy*—is due out by the end of next year. We asked Executive Producer Neal Young what to expect from it. “It's going to be the next evolution in action-adventure titles,” said Young, “so it's sort of an extrapolation of what we've been building so far, but it starts to introduce some interesting shifts. The idea isn't to just take you back through the fiction again, but to give you some other characters who you might not expect to be able to play, and really extend the multiplayer features, develop the online feature, and do some other things.”

PlayStation 2



Includes



game disc

+



EyeToy B59 camera



EVERYONE



Violence

Disco Stars. One of 12 EyeToy: Play games that makes you the star. EyeToy puts you on-screen and its motion-tracking technology puts you in charge, letting your body control the action. Everyone can watch. Anyone can play. And you can be on the TV.

LIVE IN YOUR WORLD.
PLAY IN OURS.

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THE RE-ANIMATORS

Garage developers breathe life into deceased consoles

One multibillion-buck company's defunct-hardware trash is another niche group of tech-minded gamers' treasure. Maybe you thought that the experimental age of Dreamcast died with kooky life-game *Seaman* or that Atari 2600 is too archaic a console to connect to modern boob tubes. But a loyal clutch of classic gamers still sees life in these old consoles and has been Frankensteinizing the most unlikely games together with their uncanny development powers. Have a look at a small cross section of this pulsing underground movement. Because if you've never herded sheep in a homemade Dreamcast game that stars a purple-haired shepherd, you haven't lived.

—Jon Dudlak

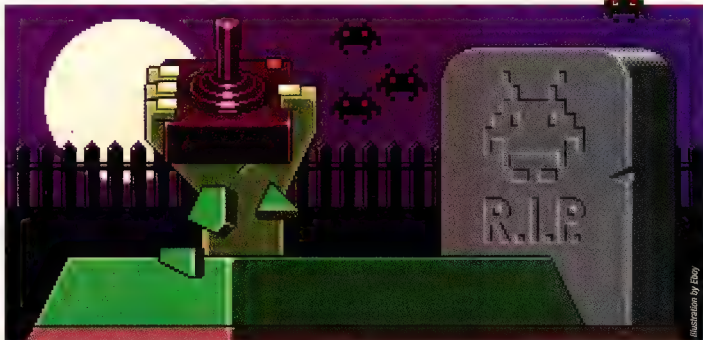
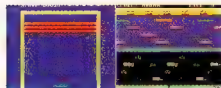


Illustration by Day



■ *Smashes and Toad*, both on Game Pack #1.

ColecoVision Game Pack #1

System: ColecoVision

Developer: Daniel Bienvenu

Where to get it:

www.gooddealgames.com for \$40

Publisher Good Deal Games is hardcore. You've got to be if you're publishing garage-crafted efforts for consoles that have been commercially dead for 20 years. Maybe you remember EGM highlighting Good Deal's *Bug Blasters: The Exterminators* and *Star Strike* for the Sega CD last year (both \$30 at gooddealgames.com). But this new collection of one-off ColecoVision diversions reaf-

firms our suspicions that these guys are not in this for the money. "Video game preservation," Good Deal rep Michael Thomasson says, "is Good Deal Games' primary goal. If we did not release these titles, some would be lost forever, and that is a portion of videogame history that would never be told."

Sure, we vaguely remember some historically significant games about amphibians crossing busy highways and capsule-shaped paddles breaking through blocks. But now you can play *Toad*, *Smashes*, and a dozen other games on one convenient cartridge for your handy ColecoVision console. OK, so there's nothing handy about it, but the box art is way rad. Check out Good Deal's website to learn what else is cooking, including indie-developed titles for the soooo-dead Philips CD-I and Vectrex, upcoming games for Dreamcast and TurboGrafx-16, and how to program your own ColecoVision games.

Everything Atari

Systems: Atari 2600, 5200, 7800, Jaguar

Where to get it: www.atariage.com

People were pissed when Pitfall Harry went on to lamet, more random adventures in *Super Pitfall* on NES. But it's never too late to set things right. As we speak, crack teams of coders are crafting unofficial sequels like *Adventure II*, oddball hybrids like *JoustPong*, trace-the-lines action games like *Painter*, and really weird stuff like man-versus-nature sim *Tree Hugger* for every system that bore the Atari name, from the 2600 to the portable Lynx and the ill-fated Jaguar. The cartridges even come in pro-looking boxes with spiffy manuals.



■ *Painter* (Jaguar CD) and *Tree Hugger* (2600).

Feet of Fury

System: Dreamcast

Developer: Cryptic Allusion

Where to get it: www.goalstore.com

for \$20

If you're that guy who people come to watch play *Dance Dance Revolution* at the local teen center, it's time to try something else. *Feet of Fury* expands the *DDR* concept into a more competitive game laden with power-ups and performance-altering items that make not screwing up even more critical. It's surprisingly rockin' for a homemade project—more fun than you'd expect from a publisher called "Goat Store." You can even load up your own music and step routines for a truly customized game.



■ Trade out your dance pad or controller for a DC keyboard and play a *Feet of Fury* mode that tests typing skills. Try that in *DDR*.

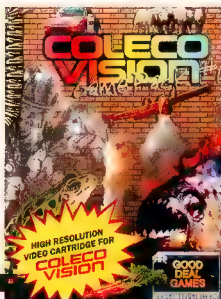
the dc three

Indie developers have given Dreamcast an active afterlife. Visit homebrew.dreamcast.com to download dozens of DC games (the niftiest three are below). No big budgets here—just cool, free stuff for you to play between new-release Tuesdays.

Smash DC
A competent clone of the ultraviolent arcade hit *Smash TV*. You'll have to build your own whacked-out double-joystick controller, though.

Bloop
It's a simple target shooter, but it's got lightning support. And if you bought a gun for your DC, Lord Knows you're looking for something to shoot with it.

Cool Herders
A polished shepherding party game that's definitely more fun than last year's PlayStation 2 critter-herding simulator, *Herdy Herdy*.



■ You can buy the game for 10 bucks less without the magnificent box, but why?

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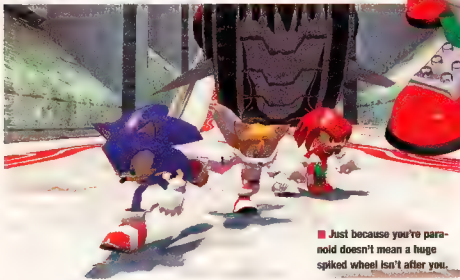
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HEROIC TRIOS

Sonic boom or bust?
Checking in on **Sonic Heroes**



■ Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean a huge spiked wheel isn't after you.

Since hitting the 3D era, the *Sonic* series has drifted a bit from its fast-paced action roots. Some feared that the latest game, *Sonic Heroes*, would be just another fuzzy-animal-driven treasure hunt lining the walls of your local game store, or that its new character-swapping team system would put the focus more on head-scratchin' strategy than manic action. But amazingly, *Sonic Heroes* (due in January for PS2, Xbox, and GC) is a step in the opposite direction, offering more sheer breakneck thrills than any title since the sepia-fleeted days of the Sega Genesis.

The team system—which lets you control a group of three characters, each with his or her own skills—offers a handful of new tactics, but *Sonic Heroes* has little patience for puzzles that can't be solved at 200 mph. The primary function of teammates is to maintain your momentum—by switching to your speedy hero for straightaways, your flier for

pits, and your brawler for enemies. And since you can change your team leader on the fly with a single button tap, *Heroes* rarely gives you a reason to stand still.

Each of the four teams plays slightly different versions of the game's 14 levels. The stages for Team Sonic (populated by series mainstays Sonic, Tails, and Knuckles), Team

of Team Chaotix (the obscure Espio, Vector, and Charmy), whose quests are reminiscent of the Knuckles/Rouge gem hunts in *Sonic Adventure 2*. And while the other characters fit predictable Sonic-Knuckles-Tails molds, purple chameleon Espio can use throwing stars and turn invisible—which makes him the breakout star of the game.

Sonic Heroes provides old-school visceral thrills not seen in half a decade.

Dark (manned by the lesser-known Shadow, Rouge, and Omega), and Team Rose (remember Amy, Big, and Cream?) are all high-speed action-adventures—and there's even one major alternative: When you're ready for a bit of exploration, you can choose the ninja detective rock stars (really)

That adventure aside, *Sonic Heroes* looks like a return to form, providing old-school visceral thrills not seen in half a decade. Now if Sega could only do something about the seizure-inducing pitch of the characters' voices....

—Casey Lee

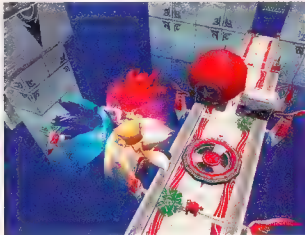
ancestor worship



Sonic Team's last experiment with team-based gameplay was the little-seen *Knuckles Chaotix*, a title beloved by all 19 people who purchased Sega's 32X add-on for the Genesis. In it, Knuckles and a second character attached to him by a rubber-band-like magical force must thwart Eggman's plans. *Heroes* thankfully abandons *Chaotix*'s plodding style of gameplay but pays homage to the game by including three of its four supporting characters: Espio the Chameleon, Vector the Crocodile, and Charmy Bee. Mighty the Armadillo, alas, is MIA.



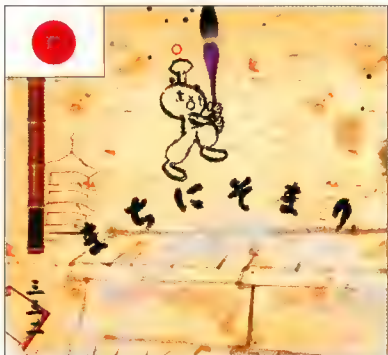
■ The special stages are all about speed.



■ Even Big's nifty Iron Monkey umbrella tricks can't erase the emotional scars caused by his fishing levels in *Sonic Adventure*.

EGM INTERNATIONAL

Games gone wild: Too weird for America!



JET SET CALLIGRAPHY

PaRappa's papa brings more freaky fun with **Mojib Ribbon**

The latest PS2 game from PaRappa the Rapper creator Masaya Matsuura, *Mojib Ribbon* (available now), takes a departure from music and delves instead into the world of Japanese calligraphy. Your typographically inclined little guy walks around a circular ribbon as you press up or down on the right thumbstick to put words in their correct places—think *Dance Dance Revolution* trapped inside a dictionary. The better your timing, the more beautiful your penmanship. Messing up costs you ink, though, and the game's over when you run out. Like Matsuura's cult hit *Vib Ribbon*, there's not much to *Mojib*, but it's addictive even if you have no knowledge of the Japanese language, and the brushwork graphics are mesmerizing in motion.



BEAR-LY PLAUSIBLE

Teach a polar bear to sing in **Kuma Uta**. You hear us?

We see lots of odd concepts here at EGM International, but this one...wow. The star of *Kuma Uta* (Bear Song) for the PS2 is a polar bear, which for reasons never really explained, you must train to become a star in the world of traditional Japanese ballads, or *enka*. You help the bear as it crafts each tune, teaching it words, switching around lyrics, and suggesting "feels" for its music (nostalgic, popish, melancholy, etc.). Then you watch your furry friend perform, complete with synthetic voice and fabulous costuming. If you've come up with a corker, you can even send the video to your friends via the PS2 Network Adaptor. A damn shame we'll never see an English version of this one.

OVERHEARD

"If I'd wanted all that computer game bulls**t, I'd have gone home and

stuck my dick in my Nintendo."

—*Kill Bill* Director Quentin Tarantino talking with Empire magazine about computer effects in movies

"**Fugitive Hunter** combines my personal experiences of living in a crime-ridden ghetto with actual research data from the FBI, the U.S. Marine Corps, and the Santa Monica Police Department."

—John Roth, president and CEO of Hunter Developer Black Ops, keepin' it real



"We are targeting **selling several million N-Gage units** in 2004."

—Nokia spokesman Kari Tuomi in a Reuters story. Independent research firm Arcadia Research reported that fewer than 5,000 N-Gages were sold in the product's first week in America

L'I'L PREVIEWS: SNEAKING, SLICING, DICING, AND WHATNOT

BLOOD WILL TELL

PS2 • Sega • Early 2004 — The name may have changed (formerly *Darango*), but the game stays the same: A samurai hunts demons to reclaim 48 body parts stolen from him, using blades and guns concealed within his prosthetic limbs. We bet you can guess which part he wants back first.



RED NINJA: END OF HONOR

PS2, Xbox • VU Games • Late 2004 — Who does honor and for a ninja? For *Red Ninja* star Kurenai, it's somewhere between a scandalously short red dress and a deadly wire that tuts her, (with some help from gravity and inertia) snag, slice, and hang the men who killed her father.



SPY FICTION

PS2 • Sammy • Early 2004 — We're not sure if the story will be a page-turner, but unorthodox spygear like advanced optic camouflage proves truth isn't cooler than fiction. The chameleon suit in this stealth actioner can turn you invisible, convert a snapshot of a terrorist into a photographic disguise.



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**ARMED
AND
DANGEROUS**



Critics agree. **Armed & Dangerous** is the killer game of the season.

★★★★ nonstop action! — **Maxim** ★★★★★ — **Stuff Gamer**

9 out of 10. "It's like there's a party in your mind, and everyone's invited!" — **GMR**

"balls-to-the-wall action: Expect all manner of destructive mayhem." — **PC Gamer**

"A combatfest armed with a sense of humor" — **Rolling Stone** "So over-the-top, we can't help but love it!" — **Alternative Press**

TEEN
T
Crude Humor
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The way it's
nVIDIA
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XBOX

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Suggestive Themes

Game Experience May Change During Online Play.

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OF 10" -GMR

"5 out of 5"
- Maxim Magazine

**TONY HAWK'S
UNDERGROUND**

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games of the year."**
- GameSpy

**"Driving! Climbing! Building!
Running! Skating will NEVER
be the same again!"**

- Official PlayStation 2 Magazine [U.K.]



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EVERYONE
E
ESRB RATING

Fantasy Violence

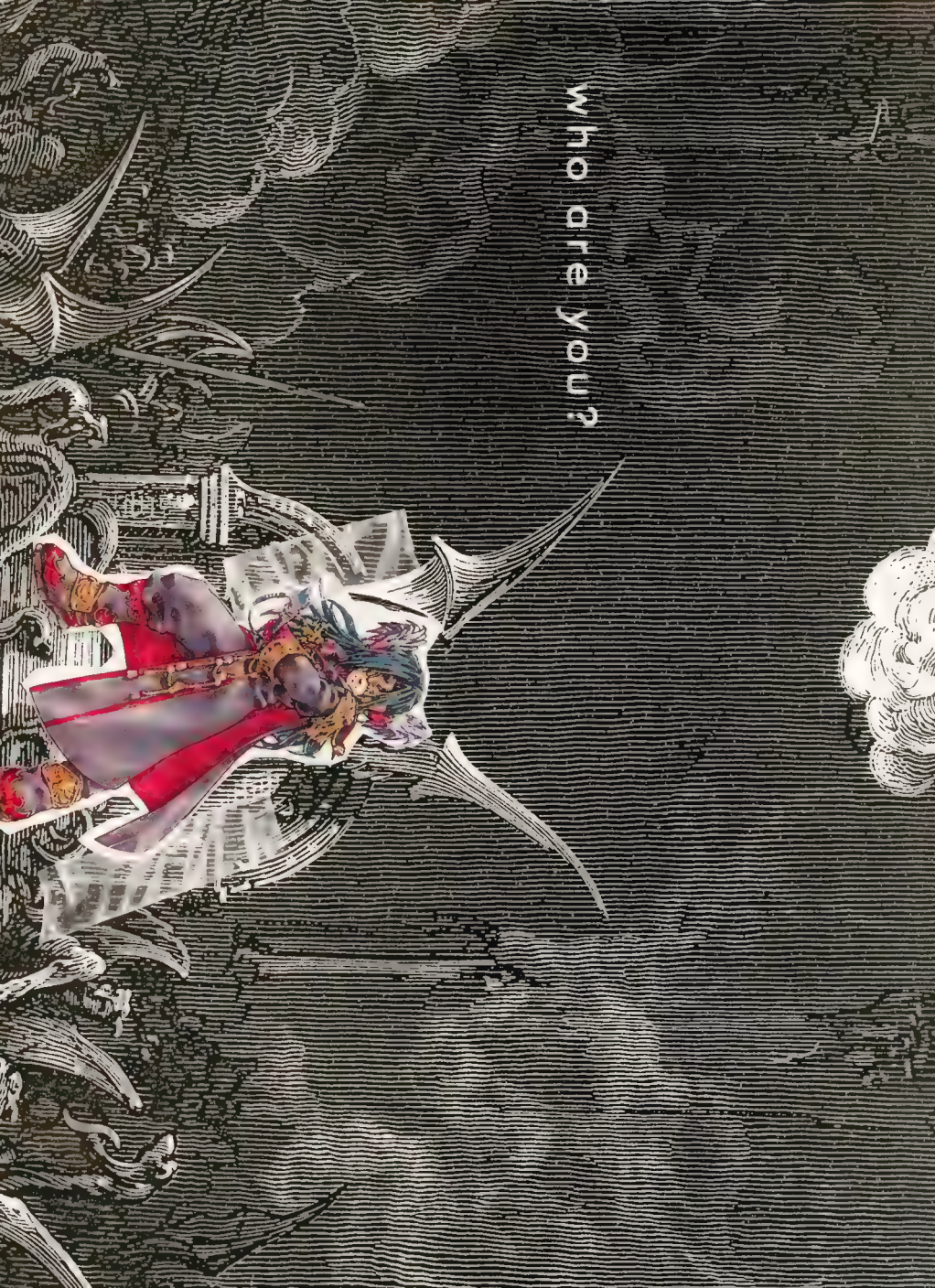
A gladiator hungry for revenge. A young girl haunted by the ghosts of her past. Together, the two must unite and race to protect the Mana Tree from those who would turn its awesome powers to dark ends. Choose your hero, uncover the secret of the Mana Tree and save the ancient wellspring of all life in the epic *Sword of Mana*.

SWORD OF MANA



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who are you?



SHOW AND TELL: NINJA GAIDEN

Director Tomonobu Itagaki demos his Ninja magic


Never piss off a ninja. That's something the Vigor Empire—after ransacking ninja-to-be Ryu Hayabusa's village and massacring all the people he cared for—is about to learn. But their mistake is our gain, since Xbox owners can take control of Ryu this December as he slashes his way to vengeance, carcass after bloodyed carcass, in Tecmo's *Ninja Gaiden*.

Perhaps you recognize the name from the classic '80s side-scrolling series? Well, good for you. Now forget all that. This game tosses aside the old story line and serves instead as a prequel to Ryu's stint in Tecmo's *Dead or Alive* fighting series. "Ryu hasn't become a master ninja yet," says *Gaiden*'s Director Tomonobu Itagaki.

As *Ninja Gaiden* opens, Ryu is setting out on his final training mission. After clearing out the game's introductory forest-stronghold level, he's told of the tragedy that has befallen his village. When Ryu returns home (via um, blink), the enemy closes in. ("Ninjas are supposed to be stealthy," jokes Itagaki, "so he shouldn't have been found so easily, but...")

Even with *Gaiden*'s release fast approaching, Itagaki is reluctant to divulge much more about the game's story. "That would take the joy away from you," he says. Instead, we convinced him to give us a fray-by-fray analysis of a few screenshots...

—Chris Johnston



Tomonobu Itagaki:
"Here, you see Ryu slashing a Ghul [a giant mummy that drags a huge weapon—usually a morning star or an ax] with his Japanese sword, Ryuken. Legend has it the Ryuken was forged from a dragon's fang. The master of the Hayabusa clan has passed it down from generation to generation. Ryu is performing a Smash Down attack with the blade while in the middle of a combo. This graveyard area is found toward the beginning of the Vigor Empire's underground world."

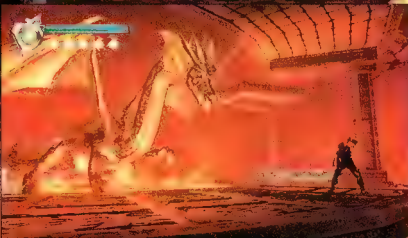
T: "Ah, yes. This is inside the Lava Cave, another part of the underground world of the Vigor Empire. You'll reach this area in the latter part of the story, but there's still a long way to go from here. Ryu is a master with the nun-chaku and is showing off his skill with it here. It's a convenient weapon, easy to carry and handle with speed. By the way, in *Gaiden*, you have [more than] 10 primary and six secondary weapons."



T: "This is the Ice Cave—it's very cold out here! Ryu's fighting a lone Gallas, a creature that looks like a dinosaur but used to be a human. They're very fierce! Ryu is winding up for a straight down swing with the War Hammer, an odd-shaped weapon that belongs to Rachel [a female warrior you'll meet in the game]."



T: "This one's pretty interesting—Ryu is attacking a Ghul. It's been decapitated by his last attack, but that's actually minor damage for them. Ryu is in the middle of a combo maneuver using Dabihuro, a huge sword he obtained during his battles."



T: "This is Smougan—a lava dragon. He's the boss of the Lava Cave underneath the Vigor Empire headquarters. He was sleeping, but as you can see he's been woken up and isn't too happy about it. [SPOILER ALERT!] Ryu's clan is destined to slay the dragon."

CELEBRITY GAMER: AQUA TEEN HUNGER FORCE

The fast food that plays together..

Turn your crank to Cartoon Network's Adult Swim programming block late on a Sunday night and you're likely to see the comedic adventures of fast-food heroes-at-large, the *Aqua Teen Hunger Force*. They are the motley group of Master Shake, resident egoist and a-hole; Frylock, the calm voice of reason; and Meatwad, the dimmest bulb of the bunch. Confused? Don't worry—it's not supposed to make sense. Currently nearing the end of a new season of episodes, and with a just-released first-season DVD set, the Force (with the help of Cartoon Network scribes Dave Willis and Matt Maiellaro) took time out of their busy schedules to sit down and talk games with us.

EGM: Which videogames do the Aqua Teens like to chill out with on the weekends, in your free time?
Shake: What's the popular one? It's the one where you drive around with the gun, shooting people who don't look like you. That one. I like that one.
Meatwad: We got us an Atari 2600 we got off the curb. Someone jammed a chocolate bar in it and it's filled with ants. So we play *Antikiller*. Only this time, the game is real. That's what the box would say.
EGM: Himm, sounds...fun. Moving on, who's the best gamer in the house?
Meatwad: Frylock, 'cause he got all the



best games. He done owns a computer with real electricity. Every time I try to play *Antikiller* on my Atari, I gotta go to the hospital. And we ain't got insurance.

EGM: *Antikiller* high scores aside, what would you say is your most memorable gaming moment?
Frylock: There's so much more to life than just "gaming moments." Have you ever tried discovering the treasures to be found at your public library?
Shake: Have you ever tried to defeat the Gorn boss on the fifth level of *Garnicopia*?
Frylock: No. I haven't.
Shake: Me neither, because you refuse to purchase it. It's free online! People are stealing all day over there. It's like I'm living with a cop.
Meatwad: I like learning games.
Shake: Learn to stay out of my way. Got that game.



■ The Moonlight Invaders (right) set fire to a dresser filled with infinitely excellent pornography while Meatwad looks on.

EGM: Tell us—what's the worst game you've ever played?
Shake: *Fun With Math*. I found it to be neither fun nor mathematical, and I find it sad that anyone would play it. It's like they made it for a 3-year old. I need 9mm laser-sighted action and bombs and boobs, and the man with the gun is the god.
EGM: Speaking of that, do you think there's a connection between violent videogames and real-life violence?
Frylock: I've read academic studies that

have made the connection between virtual violence and—
Shake: How is that right? It is impossible to order a plasma pulse rifle exactly like Duke Nukem's anywhere, and I've checked. And that makes me mad. It's like the world is rigged against me. But I will show them....
EGM: Lastly, Frylock—what's the jewel on your back? Can we touch it?
Frylock: What jewel? And no, you can't.
 —Chris Johnston



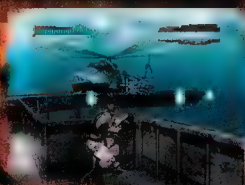
COVER OR RELIGION.

ON THIS BATTLEFIELD, EVERYONE FINDS SOMETHING.

Stay out of harm's way while unleashing a barrage of blindfire.

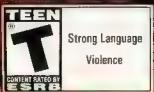
Confront relentless, fiercely intelligent enemies.

Objects are your only allies. Cover is your only saving grace.



KILL SWITCH

TAKE COVER. TAKE AIM. TAKE OVER.



PlayStation 2



Women are nothing but trouble. In *Max Payne 2*, at least. (Gough, cough.)

It's bullet time all the time in *Max Payne 2*

In a ballad of blood and bullets, the world around me slows to a crawl. To my left, an armed thug, clad in Armani. To my right, Mr. Armani's five friends. They stand, aiming at me, but I'm faster. Much faster. I dive through the air, hands out, guns raised, and pull the triggers. Who am I? Max Payne—the hard-boiled lead of *Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max*

the prime suspect in a murder case, leaving Max to choose between the badge or the broad. But Cupid hasn't completely changed our old pal Max. In fact, *Max Payne 2* doesn't dramatically mess with the original's bullet-ridden formula. (The game's length, for instance, still clocks in at a scant six to 10 hours.) Yet, in retrospect, playing the two games back-to-back (the

falling straight through solid walls like in the last game, corpses will bend and slump over like so many rag dolls.

As before, the most stunning visual effect in *Max Payne 2* is bullet time, the slow-motion gameplay mechanic that allows you to dodge enemy gun spray and target foes while hurling yourself through the air. There are now two levels of bullet time for various situations: The original shoot-dodge, as well as a new 2.0 version that allows you to move slightly faster while tinting the screen in a beautifully bronzed glow.

And like gumdrops dusted with arsenic, Max hasn't lost his penchant for waxing poetic in his pulp-style voiceovers, using wordy, overwrought metaphors. Depending on what you thought of the original's writing, it's as charming or annoying as ever.

—Johnny Liu

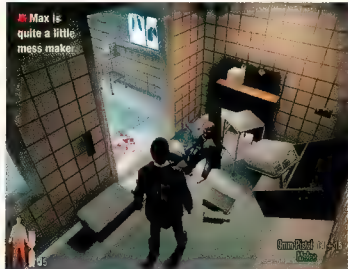


Max Payne 2 doesn't dramatically mess with the series' bullet-ridden formula.

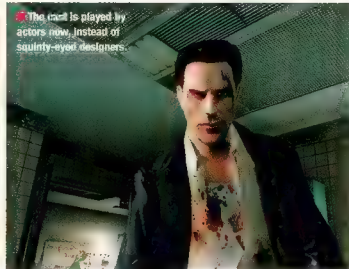
Payne. Due this December for PS2 and Xbox, this trigger-happy third-person shooter follows our good-cop-gone-mad as he tries to pull himself away from his sordid past...but that past just won't let go.

Case in point: Mona Sax, the femme fatale who graced Max's original adventure, has reemerged, drawing Payne back into a world of deceit and mystery. Seems Mona's

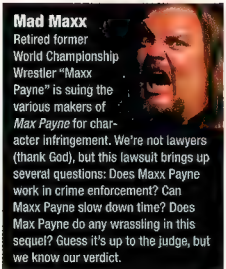
PC versions, at least—we haven't tried the sequel's console editions yet, which are reportedly very similar), it's obvious nearly every detail has been given a new layer of polish. *Max Payne 2* boasts a tighter story and sharper textures, and the environments feel more alive, thanks to more interactive objects—boxes tumble, oil cans roll, and enemies keel over realistically. Instead of



Max is quite a little mess maker.



The cast is played by actors now, instead of squinty-eyed designers.



Mad Maxx
Retired former World Championship Wrestler "Maxx Payne" is suing the various makers of *Max Payne* for character infringement. We're not lawyers (thank God), but this lawsuit brings up several questions: Does Maxx Payne work in crime enforcement? Can Maxx Payne slow down time? Does Maxx Payne do any wrassling in this sequel? Guess it's up to the judge, but we know our verdict.

REMEMBER RENT A HERO NO.1, THE XBOX GAME WE REVIEWED IN OUR AUGUST ISSUE? WELL, ITS U.S. RELEASE HAS BEEN DELAYED INDEFINITELY, SO IT'S UNLIKELY YOU'LL PLAY IT...

THE THRILL OF SINGING
MEETS THE AGONY OF DEFEAT.



Karaoke Revolution

When it comes to singing, you may already be a winner. Find out with the first karaoke video game that actually judges your vocal talents. Karaoke Revolution™ turns you into a star and your PlayStation®2 into an interactive karaoke machine, complete with scoring, training and a built-in audience.

Sing along with 35 hit songs, including chart-toppers popularized by Michelle Branch, R.E.M., Avril Lavigne, Nickelback, Barenaked Ladies and more. It's the ultimate party game with multiplayer for up to 8 of your friends, so step up to the mic and discover how well you carry a tune. And just how much fun agony can be.



PlayStation 2

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*"It's stealthy... and damned if it doesn't
look like **an excellent game.**
And there can never be enough stealth gaming"*
— Official Xbox Magazine, August 2003



Use the shadows to infiltrate.



*Apply a diverse array
of stealth tactics.*



*Choose from a wide variety of
IMF gadgets and weapons.*



*Guide your IMF team through
action sequences inspired by the
Mission: Impossible® movies.*

*"The range of moves seems to be matched only by the number of gadgets
and weapons in his **formidable arsenal.**"*

— Gamespot, May 2003

"We're very excited."

— Game Informer, August 2003

www.MI-game.com



PlayStation 2



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INTRODUCING XSN SPORTS It's time to stake your claim at the highest level. To your friends, your family or anyone around the world. XSN Sports allows you to play sports games in a whole new way by merging them with the highly competitive world of fantasy leagues. Create online tournaments, drafts and leagues. Check out the stats on your PC. Play anyone, anytime, anywhere on the Xbox Live™ service. With an extensive portfolio of games, XSN Sports goes beyond the playing field, giving you more control than ever. Step up and show the world what you've got.



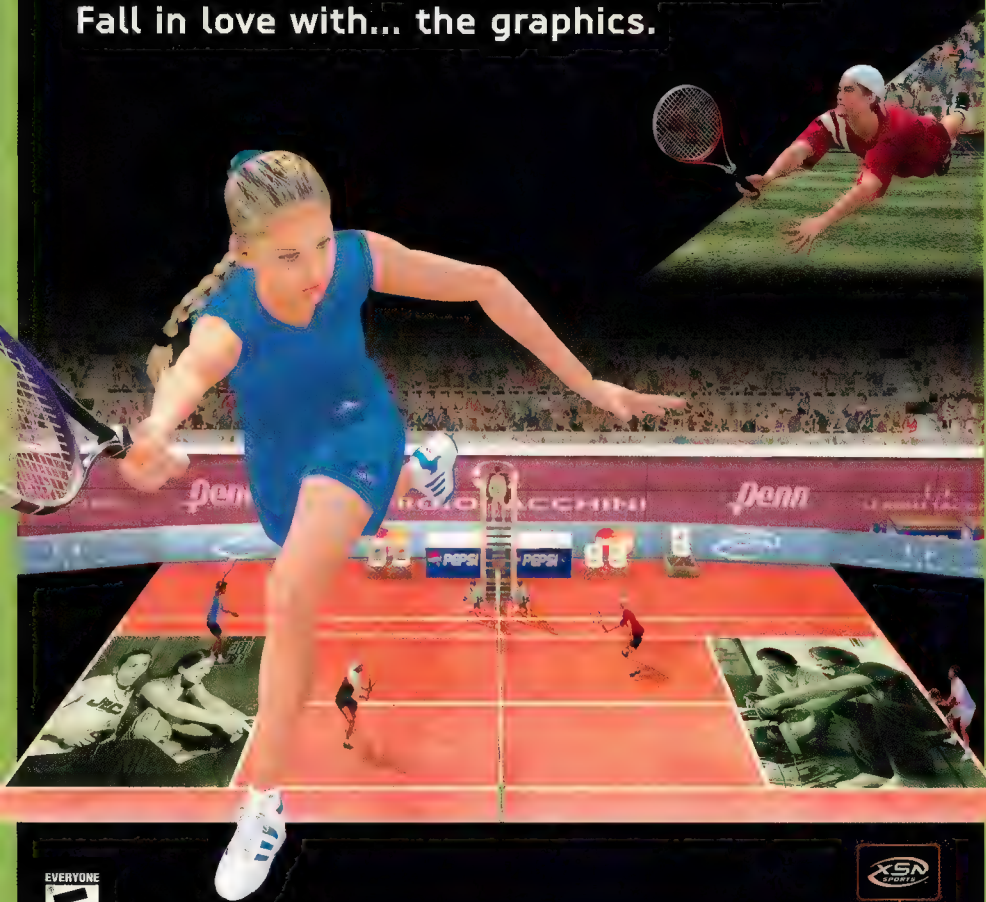
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Slam cross-courts, cross-country.
 Plow your way to the number one seed.
 Fall in love with... the graphics.



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CONTENT RATED BY
 ESRB

Microsoft
 game studios



"Quiet Please?" Puh-leez! Let's dispense with the formality shall we? Top Spin™ is a tennis game that isn't afraid to play it like it is. All the excitement of baseline battles, diving volleys and temper tantrums is in your hands. Grab a court on the Xbox Live™ service and serve up back-handed comments along with vicious backhands. Hit the 'net and use XSN Sports on your PC to track your current world ranking. Whether you play as Sampras, Kournikova, Hewitt or yourself, you'll have to take risks to be crowned king of the court. Just don't try any between-the-legs shots at home.

TOP SPIN™



it's good to play together

xbox.com/topspin

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HITTING PLAYDIRT

How to use your game skills to pay the bills

Attention jockey: jockeys. All that couch-potato time could pay off. Just ask former *Quake* champ Dennis "Thresh" Fong. "Gaming was just a hobby," he says. "Then I started winning tournaments and the money started rolling in." Fong used his winnings and fame to invest in several Web ventures, including UltimateArena.com, which lets anyone play PC games competitively for real money, just like Fong did.

In fact, competitive gamers today have many ways to get into the play-for-cash-and-loot racket. On the console side, they can join Major League Gaming, which holds nationwide tournaments for *Halo*, *Madden*, *Gan Turismo 3*, and *Soul Calibur II*. Participants at its recent *Halo* event walked away with 10,000 bucks. PC fans have more options, including

Game-champ Fong's other job is a Ferris wheel—this is his other job.

the bustling Cyberathlete Professional League (www.cyberathlete.com). Factory in upstart outfits like the Global Gaming League and event-based tournaments at QuakeCon and the World Cyber Games, and skilled players have ample chance to nab some green—especially if they stand on a corporate-sponsored team. And if you really want to bank on your skills, try *YouPlayGames.com*, which lets players wager on multiplayer matches. While such gambling hardly seems legitimate, the government has yet to get involved. Don't count on getting rich quick, though; competition for top slots is

steep. Considering the potential payouts, however ("The Ferrari won still sits in my parking lot, looking real pretty," affirms Fong), we figure a few of you will rise to the challenge. "Now that gaming has become more mainstream," Fong says, "lots of professional leagues exist, was once the undisputed champion. Now there are..."

—Scott Steinberg

playing for keeps

Hit these sites to join the play-for-pay game...

www.mgpro.com
The only console-specific group, Major League Gaming is hosting tournaments across the country.

www.ultimatearena.com
Fong's own site lets you put your money where your mouse is and wager on your game skills.

www.youplaygames.com
Similar to Ultimate Arena, this site'll have you winning or losing cash based on your playing abilities.

www.sglleague.com
The Global Gaming League recruits top-dog players and has them compete for cash.

Photography by Michael Schemer

CHARTS

TOP 10 BEST-SELLING GAMES FOR SEPTEMBER 2003

-
- 1 Madden NFL 2004**
PS2, EA Sports
 - 2 Final Fantasy Tactics Advance**
GBA, Nintendo
 - 3 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004**
PS2, EA Sports
 - 4 Soul Calibur II**
PS2, Namco
 - 5 Soul Calibur II**
GC, Namco
 - 6 Grand Theft Auto: Vice City**
PS2, Rockstar
 - 7 Soul Calibur II**
XB, Namco
 - 8 ESPN NFL Football**
XB, EA Sports
 - 9 Madden NFL 2004**
XB, EA Sports
 - 10 SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs**
PS2, Sony CEA

TOP 10 GAME RENTALS FOR THE WEEK ENDING 10/19/03

-
- BLOCKBUSTER**
- 1 Conflict: Desert Storm II**
PS2, Gotham Games
 - 2 Madden NFL Football 2004**
PS2, EA Sports
 - 3 Jak II**
PS2, Sony CEA
 - 4 NBA Live 2004**
PS2, EA Sports
 - 5 The Simpsons: Hit & Run**
PS2, VU Games
 - 6 Conflict: Desert Storm II**
XB, Gotham Games
 - 7 Backyard Wrestling**
PS2, Eidos
 - 8 Kirby Air Ride**
GC, Nintendo
 - 9 Soul Calibur II**
PS2, Namco
 - 10 Enter the Matrix**
PS2, Atari

Source: NPD TRS Systems; Madden NFL 2004: EA Sports; Conflict: Desert Storm II: GSC; NBA Live 2004: EA Sports; Jak II: Sony Computer Entertainment; Backyard Wrestling: Eidos; Kirby Air Ride: Nintendo; Soul Calibur II: Namco; Enter the Matrix: Atari

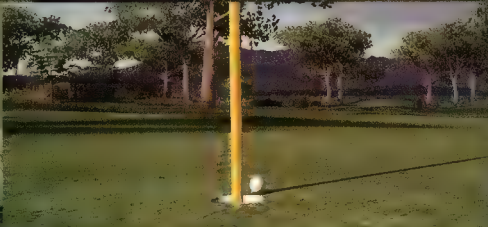
L1' PREVIEWS: FOR SNEAKERS AND STABBERS

THE BARD'S TALE
PS2, XB, GC + TBA • Late 2004 — In this tale of a lecherous, smartass bard capable of drinking incredible quantities of ale and summoning creature companions with song, you chase skirts, slay monsters, and mock game conventions in an action-RPG update to the hallowed classic for Apple II, NES, etc.

SUIKODEN 4
PS2 • Konami • TBA — Possibly the wettest, wildest RPG yet, *Suikoden 4* lets you explore island nations, recruit up to 108 party members, and do battle on land and sea. And say good-bye to the gimpy hero proportions of part three: Characters like the ultracurvy Jeanne stand tall and proud.

NINTENDO'S PLANT-LIFE-MANAGEMENT-SIM SEQUEL, *PIKMIN 2*, ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED TO SHIP FOR GAMECUBE THIS FALL, HAS BEEN DELAYED UNTIL EARLY IN 2004.

Everything in this game is unbelievably realistic.
Including the yutz yelling "YOU DA MAN!"
in your headset as you tee off.



EVERYONE



Microsoft
GAMES STUDIOS



Links, the best-selling PC golf series of all time, is now on the tee with Xbox. Everything you love about playing 18 has been beautifully re-created down to the last ball dimple. TV commentators whisper about your every swing as you go for the pin. But there's no whispering necessary on the Xbox Live™ service, where trash talk flies farther than tee shots. Use XSN Sports on your PC to check your status on the Worldwide Leaderboard. With over 10 modes of play and 8 famous courses to choose from, you'll give Links a resounding golf clap.



Links
2004

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xbox.com/links2004

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PLATE MALE

Capcom thinks outside the boxers with *Maximo vs. Army of Zin*

Last year's *Maximo: Ghosts to Glory* was a throwback to the days of gaming yore, an old-school action game gone 3D. As such, its unremitting difficulty crushed many warriors. Some didn't even bother trying—despite critical praise, the game wasn't a huge commercial hit. Fortunately for us, it sold well enough to warrant a sequel: February's *Maximo vs. Army of*

he has been blessed. "Maximo begins his new quest with more combat moves than he had at the end of the previous game with all of his power-ups," says Producer Mark Rogers. Indeed, there are numerous combos and attacks (detailed in the sidebar) with which to punish your enemies. The combat moves are simple to perform, but that's not to say the fights

basis with The Grim Reaper. When things get hairy and your power meter fills up, you can temporarily take control of Grim and cut a harvest of malicious metal with vicious swings of the scythe. The assistance is very helpful, as is the new ability to save at your leisure between levels without having to dip into your purse of gold coins.

Instead, you'll be using your plunder to purchase equipment (like a new pair of undies that give you that special tingle when treasure is near) and improved combat moves. Saving innocents is now a major focus in the game, too. For example, you might come across a villager who is moments away from falling under the blade of a Zin soldier. Quickly throw your shield at the creature, and you'll stun it long enough to be able to dispatch it with your sword and rescue the fair maiden. "Of course, the player can just let her die," says Rogers, "but then a dead girl can't whisper [the location of hidden gold]." So, if *Army of Zin* can't appeal to your sense of valor, it'll attempt to entice your pocketbook instead. **✶**

—Justin Speer

While still challenging, the new Maximo is definitely much more accessible.

Zin for PS2. Our hero has undergone some major changes since last time—and not just his famous heart-patterned underwear.

A recent session with *Army of Zin* showed that, while still challenging, it's definitely much more accessible than *Ghosts to Glory*. The game's imposing backdrop is a one-man war against a relentless army of automatons—but luckily, the heroic Maximo has prayed at the altar of combo attacks, and lo,

themselves are easy. Take too many hits and your armor will crumble, leaving you facing down mean-looking sickle-wielding machines in nothing but your skivvies.

Between constantly clashing with kill-crazy robots and making multiple death-defying leaps, you'll end up taking dirt naps at fairly regular intervals.

But the brave Maximo has naught to fear from death—in fact, he's on a first-name



■ Our hero jumps into the tray against bots gone bad. Heck, it beats busting ghosts!



killing machines

Maximo was a competent swordsman in his last game, *Ghosts to Glory*, but simple slashes won't do against the remorseless, mechanical Army of Zin. These new moves help transform this king into a royal badass.

Juggle
This is a Capcom game, so of course you can loft your foes into the air with a quick slash (Up + Triangle) or a majestic rising uppercut (Up + Square).

1,000 Cuts
Laying into the Square button results in numerous rapid stabs followed by a power thrust, which could put a hole through the devil himself.

Mighty Blow
Power through enemies with an upgradeable piercing dash (hold Up + Triangle)—like the juggle, it's the same as in *Devil May Cry*.

Whirling Blades
Spin the analog stick and scatter the nuts and bolts of your enemies to the four winds with the mighty circular slash. Good for making a point about your personal space.



■ Maximo fights through foes to save a villager—before it's too late.



■ Maximo uses the Grim Reaper—basically him instead.

In my league the Maple Leafs and Red Wings settle their grudge in Tempe.



EVERYONE



Microsoft
game studios



Step on the ice with no excuses. XSN Sports brings you NHL Rivals 2004. Team to team, fan to fan, settle your beef here and now with online play. Face-off and throw down in the ultimate grudge match between classic rivals in online tournaments and revolutionary Virtual Pick-Up games on the pond. Track stats, leader boards, records and rankings on your PC at the XSN Sports website to determine once and for all who really is the best. Then let 'em know on the Xbox Live™ service. Don't let your mouth write checks the puck can't cash.

NHL RIVALS
2004



it's good to play together

xbox.com/nhrrivals2004

XSNsports.com requires a computer, internet connection and subscription to Xbox Live. Additional fees may apply for Content Downloads. NHL, National Hockey League, the NHL Shield and the Stanley Cup are registered trademarks of the National Hockey League. All NHL logos and marks herein are the property of the NHL and the respective teams and may not be reproduced without prior written consent of NHL Enterprises, LP. ©2003 NHL. All rights reserved. Officially Licensed Product of the National Hockey League, National Hockey League Players' Association, NHLPA, and the NHLPA. Logos are trademarks of the NHL, PA and are used under license by Microsoft. NHLPA, Officially Licensed Product of the NHLPA. ©2003 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Xbox, the Xbox logo, the XSN Sports logo, the Microsoft Game Studios logo and Xbox Live are either registered trademarks or trademarks of the Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Entertainment Ratings Board. The names of actual products and companies mentioned herein may be trademarks of their respective owners.



■ Lucky folks chosen as *Final Fantasy XI* beta testers received a box from Sony with everything you see here (some assembly required).

ONLINE THIS MONTH

Will brake for beta tests

Right now, you could be playing games online that won't be on store shelves for months—and you don't even have to leave your house. All you have to do is join a beta test. Beta tests help game publishers make sure the online play in their upcoming releases function properly by letting a few thousand average Joe gamers hop on and try things out. The number of these controlled trials continues to grow as more publishers dip their toes into online gaming. Need examples? Sony did it with *SOCOM I* and *II*, *EverQuest Online Adventures*, and *Final Fantasy XI* (all PS2); Microsoft did it with Xbox Live and its first games before launching the service nationwide; and Capcom's just started one for *Steel Battalion: Line of Contact* (Xbox).

Getting your foot in the door is simple. Registration info invariably appears on popular gaming message boards on the Net. Lurk in the right places (like EGM's

talk depot at www.egmmag.com), and when the call comes up, you'll see it. Designated nerd hangouts not your bag? Filled out product-registration cards and signing up for e-mail updates from game-publisher websites may get you an e-mail notice if one of them starts a beta test for an upcoming title.

Doing all of these things is still no guarantee, but should you win a coveted spot in a test, prepare to play the game a lot and give feedback to the producers and designers via the Web or e-mail. Your comments will shape the final product, so it's the opportunity many gamers only dream of: to help make their favorite games better. Most tests run from a few weeks to a few months, and while you usually won't get to keep the beta gear once the test is over, you will likely get something for your trouble, like a deal on buying the final, shrink-wrapped version directly from the company.

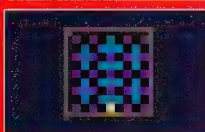


■ Testing Capcom's online *Steel Battalion* breathes new life into that \$200 investment.

On egmmag.com

Square Enix unveiled the next *Final Fantasy*, aptly called *Final Fantasy XII*, November 19. Head to ffxii.egmmag.com for all the latest info. And stop by extra.egmmag.com for content we couldn't squeeze into the mag, like a chat with Nintendo VP George Harrison about the company's future, the full text of our Q&A with the Aqua Teen Hunger Force (see page 60 for a taste), and interviews with the developers of *Maximo 2*, *Resident Evil Outbreak*, and *Fatal Frame 2* for PS2.

must-hit websites



guinip.com/pacman_flash.html — Like *Pac-Man?* Ever think, "Wow, I wish I could play a really, really, really tiny version of it on the Web?" No. Well, that wish you never made (and never planned to) has finally come true. Experience it, or die trying.



www.miyamoto Shrine.com — Judging from this site's obsessive amount of info on *Mario* and *Zelda*, creator Shigeru Miyamoto, we imagine the apartments of the two guys who run this site are wallpapered with images of him. Nakkid.



planet-meganian.com/mmmovie/ — Find out what happens when a group of college students make a trailer for a fictional live-action movie based on Capcom's *Mega Man*. The results are, as they say in the trailers, "shetto fabulous."

PC GAMING UPDATE

Stick this in your stocking



If you're looking for the kind of holiday cheer only a game for your tricked-out PC can yield, check these out:

Tron 2.0 — Yeah, it's based on a 20-year-old movie, but this first-person shooter has style and depth out the wazoo. With incredible graphics that will really show off your new state-of-the-art 3D card, *Tron 2.0* combines RPG character development, strategy elements, and nonstop action.

Rise of Nations — This real-time strategy game may look like *Age of Empires*, but it isn't, thanks to a heavy dose of the national-building concepts from the *Civilization* series. By introducing new ideas—such as national borders, meaningful trade, and knowledge as an actual resource—*Rise* is its own challenging animal. A slew of customizable multiplayer options make this a serious contender for Hopeless Online Addiction of the Year.

Unreal Tournament 2004 — The franchise that toppled *Quake* as king of multiplayer shooters is back with a vengeance this year, adding new game modes as well as resurrecting fan-favorite Assault, which was absent in last year's model. *UT* is adding vehicles that should easily top *Halo's*. With a better single-player game, improved bot A.I., and *UT's* signature thrilling gameplay, what's not to love?

Freelancer — Space combat has never been so accessible, beautiful, or personalized. *Freelancer* allows you to progress through the single-player story line at your own pace, letting you choose whether you become an interstellar trader, smuggler, bounty hunter, or more. You'll customize your ship to suit your fighting style as you head for the final battle—and then keep playing, as the best rewards come after the "official" game's over.

—Robert Coffey, Computer Gaming World



THE WORLD'S MOST ELITE COMMANDO UNIT
IS LEAVING THE JUNGLE.

SOCCOM II
SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMANDO
UNIT



ONLY TO ENTER ANOTHER ONE.

SO COME
with
GEN. RAYGEBAL



A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN

Photograph courtesy of Corbis

Turn your game into online fantasy sports

If you've ever wanted to get more involved in football than just showing up on Sunday half-naked and covered in body paint, you're in luck. Sega,

Microsoft, and EA are at the forefront of the convergence of fantasy sports leagues and videogames, offering armchair athletes options like leagues, rankings, and stat

tracking. If you haven't gotten into the online game, maybe you should. Here's a quick look at what you can expect to find via the big three's services. Happy huddling.

XSN Sports
xsnsports.com

ESPN SEGA ESPN
espnvideogames.com

EA Sports Nation
easportsonline.com

First and Goal

Service for *NFL Fever 2004* offered through Xbox Live allows for full-league setup and stat tracking. And these commissioners don't drug test.

Offers message boards, but tournaments and rankings are all done within the game. Still, it's a good way to meet the hardcore *ESPN NFL Football* crowd.

EA's rankings and stats system supports logging in through any PC to view results. Can be used with any EA Sports title, but only the PS2 versions.

Touchdown

Seamless coordination—play the games on your Xbox, check the stats on your PC while you're at work. It really doesn't get any easier than that. Props to Microsoft for showin' good hustle.

Specific to *ESPN NFL Football* (but guaranteed to make an appearance in other *ESPN* games) is the website league tracking stuff—real box scores and stat tracking with an *ESPN* look.

Attractive graphical popups and clear buddy-list statistical comparisons are the big highlights here. We also give EA high marks for its easy-to-navigate lobby/challenge structure.

Fumble

Message board setup for coordinating game scheduling feels too archaic. People were already doing better than this with Sega's *NFL2K1* back in 2001. Maybe Microsoft can recover the ball in time for next year.

A lack of distinction between Xbox and PS2 message boards can send some mixed messages. Also, while XSN and EASN share features across multiple games, there's no word if *ESPN* will support NHL and NBA leagues.

No leagues? Well, EA wasn't first to the plate with online play, so we didn't expect it to be first on board with leagues. Message boards are grouped under each product webpage and aren't very active.

Unnecessary Roughness

Playing *NFL Fever 2004* is preferable to swimming in hell's lake of fire, but not by much. (Can you tell we think the game is still a bit weak?) But using XSN is nice, and it's great for games like *Top Spin* and *Rallisport Challenge 2*.



Helpful tip No. 4, gleaned from the forums: To lessen your chances for divergence errors on Xbox Live, reboot the system after every complete game played. And don't go nuts with sliders and defensive matchups, either.

With cover boy Michael Vick on the sidelines thanks to the *Madden* curse, we're sure he's logged more than a few games of *Madden NFL 2004*. Hope he's enjoyed seeing 99.9 percent of the game's users abuse his 95 speed rating (we know we have).

Step into the boots of a SEAL team in *SOCOM II: U.S. NAVY SEALs* and face the ultimate challenge: urban combat.



Developed in association with the U.S. Navy SEALs, *SOCOM II* is close-quarters combat at its most realistic. Invisible snipers lay in wait. Enemies lurk around every corner. And every civilian could be a friend or foe. Stealth is your greatest weapon.



Wage urban war in single-player mode. Or go online and play with and against up to 16 total players. Either way, a *SOCOM*-compatible headset will help you communicate and work together as a team. Remember, together you stand. Divided you don't stand a chance.



Take the war on terror to the enemy on 12 intense international missions. Command. Courage. Country. Hoo-yah.

SOCOM II

U.S. NAVY SEALs



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PLAY IN OURS.

PlayStation 2

ONLINE
BROADCASTING ONLY
www.us.playstation.com
www.seal.navy.mil

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Blood
Violence

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IN MY QUEST
FOR REDEMPTION

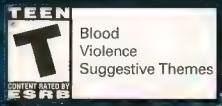
NOT EVEN MY
DEATH



I COMMAND THE FORCES OF TIME

BECEIVED BY A TREACHEROUS VIZIER, I WAS LED TO UNLEASH THE DARK POWERS OF THE SANDS OF TIME UPON THE SULTAN'S KINGDOM. NOW, AS DARKNESS CONSUMES ALL IN ITS PATH, MY SPEED, AGILITY, AND SKILL AS A WARRIOR ARE NOT ENOUGH. I MUST LEARN TO COMMAND THE SANDS TO SLOW, FREEZE, ACCELERATE, AND EVEN REVERSE TIME ITSELF. IF I FAIL TO UNDO MY FATAL MISTAKE, ALL SHALL PERISH WITH ME. MINE IS A FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL... NOT GLORY.

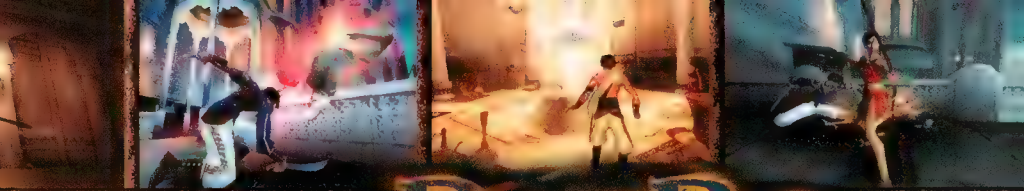
www.princeofpersiagame.com



GAME BOY ADVANCE

PlayStation 2





PRINCE OF PERSIA

THE SANDS OF TIME

CAN STOP ME

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— ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY

"A PRIME CANDIDATE FOR GAME OF THE YEAR."
— MATT CASAMASSINA, IGN.COM

"MOVING THE ACTION GENRE
TO THE NEXT LEVEL."
— GAME INFORMER



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UBISOFT



THE RUMOR MILL

Gossip that jingles all the way

q-mann



SANTA-FIED

Ho, ho, ho and a hearty hello from your honorable holiday host, The Q-Mann. Up on the housetop I arrive in my sleigh; with a sack full of rumors and gossip to give you today. Wrapped in colorful paper with ribbons and bows, you await its arrival on the lips of your stash. Send your comments to quartermann@ziffdavis.com but don't call me an ass.

—The Q



■ Sabreman may still come to GBA in Sabre Wulf, but his Xbox kart racer is off.

Xbox 2 dev kits late

The Q's network of well-placed spies have reported that while development kits for Xbox 2 were supposed to ship out to major developers in the U.S. and Japan in the fall of '03 (what originally would have been early), they've been delayed to an unspecified time in 2004. That matches recent talk of longer waits for other next-generation consoles (like PS3).

What price PSP?

Word on the street of late indicates that Sony's PlayStation Portable (aka PSP) will rack in at an MSRP of \$299. The feature-laden, on-the-go entertainment device is still on schedule to make its first public appearance at the annual Electronic Entertainment Expo in May (which is fast approaching) for a late 2004 release.

Rare cans kart racer

Sometimes a game just doesn't come together and gets the ax. At least that's what The Q's rumor sleuths say is the case with Rare's untitled Xbox kart racer, which started its life for Nintendo's GameCube as a Donkey Kong-themed title, only to change to a Sabreman theme once Microsoft bought the developer. (Sabreman is a character from Sabre Wulf, an old Rare computer game and a not-yet-released GBA revival.)

Romero runs Gauntlet

Former id Software (*Doom*, *Quake*) and Ion Storm (*Deus Ex*) figurehead John Romero has joined Midway, and reportedly his first duty is helping out with a new console version of the arcade classic *Gauntlet*.

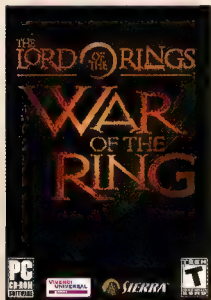
New GTA coming in 2004

Not satisfied by the *Grand Theft Auto* copycats popping up all over the place? Then you'll be happy to know that The Q has caught official word of

the next version of the megapopular *GTA* series coming in 2004 (only to PS2 because of exclusivity deals). I'm excited. How about you?



Welcome to Middle-earth.
The journey begins this fall.



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DESERT ISLAND GAMES: TONY HAWK



Every month, we harass a celebrity or game designer about answering the fateful question: if you were stranded on a deserted island, which three games would you want

to bring along to add some fun to your sun? This month, we strand high-flying man-of-action-sports Tony Hawk.

—Marc Seltzman



Tony Hawk's Underground
(PS2, Xbox, GC)

"My next skateboarding adventure is the most customizable and replayable game around."



Grand Theft Auto: Vice City
(PS2, Xbox)

"[Grand Theft Auto: Vice City] is endlessly challenging and addictively perverse."



Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer
(PS2, Xbox, GC)

"I'll need that game for days when the waves are flat on my island."

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— PLAY MAGAZINE

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ENGAGE IN HAIR-RAISING COMBAT

SOLVE MIND-BENDING PUZZLES

EXPLORE MIDDLE-EARTH



Long ago, the Lonely Mountain trembled as the Dragon Smaug destroyed the Dwarf-kingdom in fire and rage. Now, the Dwarves set out upon an epic quest to reclaim their stolen treasures. And I, Gandalf the wizard, send with them the most unlikely of heroes: you, Bilbo Baggins of the Shire.

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BINK VIDEO

PC CD-ROM

GAMEBOY ADVANCE

XBOX

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ADVENTURE

VIVENDI UNIVERSAL VIDEO

GAMEBOY ADVANCE

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Violence
Comic Mischief

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COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE

Can the smash PC squad-based shooter **Counter-Strike** succeed on Xbox Live?

When in-game trash talking pushed the wrong buttons, one player at an LA cyber cafe grabbed a screwdriver and killed a competitor. That same December day at another Southern California gaming center, a testosterone-charged tournament erupted into a 100-man riot involving hurled chairs, swinging pipes, and a pistol that left one teen hospitalized.

All this for a game started in a Vancouver basement? Without a doubt, *Counter-Strike*—which began as a fanmade add-on for PC first-person shooter *Half-Life* and ended up as one of the most popular PC games of all time—is a certified phenomenon. And this December, it's coming to an Xbox near you. Its rules are simple: Eight-man counterterrorist teams must coordinate to extract hostages, defuse explosives, and eliminate the opposition. Or you can choose to play as one of the eight bad guys if you're feeling sinister. If this sounds familiar, it should. *Counter-Strike*'s influence is obvious in most of today's squad-based shooters for both consoles and PC.

Long before *SOCOM*'s Navy SEALs set off to save the world, *Counter-Strike* immersed PC gamers in squad-based battles where a single well-aimed round can spell catastrophe, and the man watching your back matters more than anything. And with over 20,000 players online at any given moment, *Counter-Strike* for PC remains as popular as ever. But today, several years after its creation, can the game achieve the same success on a console? After all, if *EverQuest* taught us anything, it's that success on PC doesn't necessarily translate to the consoles. So, what sets this 5-year-old first-person shooter apart from the *Halo*s and *Rainbow Six* 3s of today's Xbox?

Counter-Strike sits somewhere between realism and reflexes. The best of both worlds, it's packed with authentic weapons and environments, yet it remains fast paced. Unlike *SOCOM* or *Ghost Recon* where ample cover encourages drawn-out games of cat and mouse, *CS*'s skirmishes are short and



brutal—waste too much time searching for concealment in these comparatively small maps and a tango will shoot you dead. Success earns skillful squads cash to spend on deadlier arms—meticulously rendered to match the authentic articles—and better equipment. Developer Valve seems to have faith in this winning formula, since it has nixed its plans to include the single-player missions from *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero* for PC, allegedly so it can spend more time improving *Counter-Strike*'s graphics and sound. "That includes adding higher-resolution textures and custom effects," says Director of Marketing Doug Lombardi, "as well as a complete overhaul of every world, character, and weapon model." And you'll still be able to improve your skills before going online by battling it out with A.I.-controlled bots on your own. In addition, the

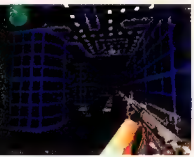
camaraderie that comes with taking your team to the top—that same esprit de corps perverted by gang mentality on that tragic winter day in California—should presumably carry over to Xbox Live.

Nevertheless, a few factors could keep the game from completely matching the success of its PC sibling. For one, PC owners can download the game for free (always a nice incentive). Second, the simple graphics that allow it to run smoothly on even low-end PCs are hardly an asset on Xbox, where, despite the enhanced horsepower, *Counter-Strike* still looks like an old game with an expensive face-lift. But if *Counter-Strike* does go big and you find yourself on the receiving end of grueling trash talk at a linked-system party, don't reach for the screwdriver. It's still only a game, man. 
—Shawn Elliott



have it your way?

Can console gamers look forward to the deep customizability enjoyed by PC counter-terrorists? "We'll be leveraging Xbox Live to deliver custom content after the game ships," insists Director of Marketing Doug Lombardi. Additional maps are almost inevitable, but don't hold your breath for oddities like this PC *Pac-Man* level.



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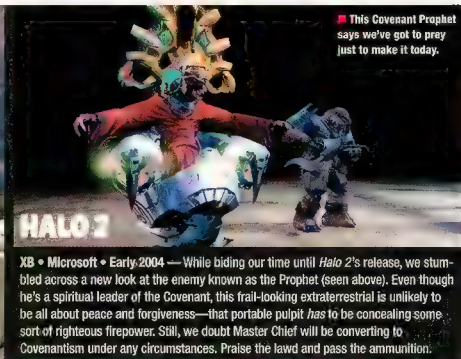
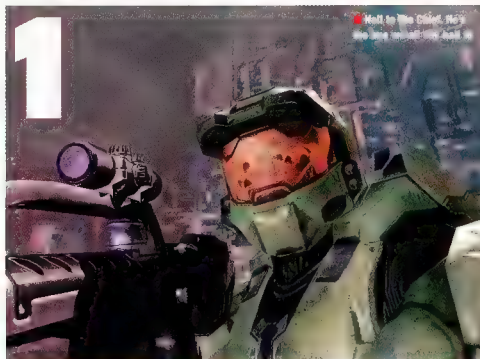
TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
Mid Language
Violence

PlayStation 2

THE HOT FIVE

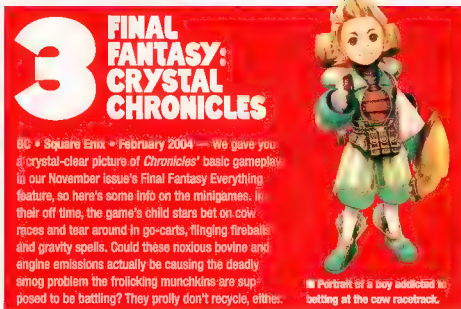
The latest on the games you're expecting to be the greatest

(Vote for your favorite games each month at egmmag.com.)



METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

PS2 • Konami • Late 2004 — With nothing new to offer Snake-hungry gamers at the recent Tokyo Game Show, Konami warmed up some leftovers: a video that set game footage to a tune that mimicked the opening credits of classic Bond films. Backup female vocals periodically sang a sweet, drawn-out "Sna-ake Eat-errr," and psychedelic colors provided a backdrop for silhouettes performing slick close-combat takedowns we'd love to see in the actual game. All in all, it was pretty shaggerific.



FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES

GC • Square Enix • February 2004 — We gave you a crystal-clear picture of *Chronicles'* basic gameplay in our November issue's Final Fantasy Everything feature, so here's some info on the minigames. In their off time, the game's child stars bet on cow races and tear around in go-carts, flinging fireballs and gravity spells. Could these noxious bovine and engine emissions actually be causing the deadly smog problem the frolicking munchkins are supposed to be battling? They prolly don't recycle, either.



NINJA GAIDEN

XB • Tecmo • December 2003
The Hot Five has already imparted all we know of *Gaiden*. Now, you must learn from the master. Turn to page 58 for our audience with director Tomonobu Itagaki.



STARCRRAFT GHOST

PS2, XB, GC • Blizzard • Spring 2004
When she's not dealing out high-velocity death from afar, "Ghost" Nova is snapping necks with the aid of optical camouflage (as seen in the screenshot above). Good thing the enemies in the game have no concept of "camouflaging" and "cheapness"—they probably wouldn't like the game's tactical nuke weapon either. Too bad.

LUCASARTS PRESIDENT SIMON JEFFERY RECENTLY RESIGNED FROM HIS POST. A LUCASARTS-ISSUED STATEMENT SAID THAT HE WAS RETURNING TO ENGLAND WITH HIS FAMILY.

Light up your Holidays with Game Boy Advance SP.



COMING SOON

On shelves for the holiday season



■ *Deus Ex's* hero asks, "You talking to me?"

DECEMBER
2003



1080° Avalanche
GC • Nintendo — This sequel to the N64 snowboarding hit ups the multiplayer max from two to four competitors.



Hack Part 4: Quarantine
PS2 • Bandai — This serialized RPG series finally concludes, so you'll finally be able to rid yourself of that persistent hack. Cough.



Armed & Dangerous
XB • LucasArts — Oddball alternative firepower like the Shark Gun is the order of the day in this quirky shooter.



BlowOut
PS2, XB • Majesco — Lead a team of crack commandos on a space station to eliminate alien beings. How novel.



Dead Man's Hand
XB • Atari — Play poker between rounds in this Western-themed first-person shooter. But is it good, bad, or ugly?



■ Whatever Max was shooting, it's dead now.



Deus Ex: Invisible War
XB • Eidos — Choices are more complicated than simple "right or wrong" in this dystopian sci-fi action/adventure game.



Final Fantasy X-2
PS2 • Square Enix — A scantily clad Yuna stars in the first-ever direct sequel to a *Final Fantasy* RPG. More, please.

MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

PS2, XB • Rockstar Games — Slugs fly and bodies drop in glorious slow-mo as the NYC cop with a sadistic surname continues to wage his one-man war on crooks. And this time, love is your battlefield: You can dodge bullets, but can you duck Cupid's arrow?



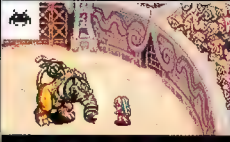
Mission: Impossible—Operation Surma
PS2, XB, GC, GBA • Atari — IMF team leader Ethan Hunt looks to have visited the *Splinter Cell* stealth school.



Pokémon Channel
GC • Nintendo — Watch Pikachu and his pocket monster friends watch TV. We-ird.



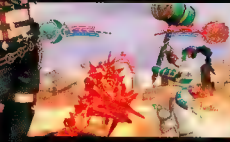
R: Racing Evolution
PS2, XB, GC • Namco — *Ridge Racer* receives a *Gran Turismo*-style makeover. In addition to licensed cars and tracks, *Evolution* offers rally and drag racing, as well as soap-opera-like rivalries and tailgating.



Sword of Mana
GBA • Nintendo — Find a link cable and have a fellow GBA owner join you in this *Mana* (from heaven) series prequel.



The Sims Bustin' Out
PS2, XB, GC, GBA • EA — Two-player co-op mode may convince your lady to try it.



Wrath Unleashed
PS2, XB • LucasArts — Piece of advice in this strategy game with real-time battles: Let the Wookiee win.



Unreal II: The Awakening
XB • Atari — Pinch us, we must be dreaming. The developers finally woke up and added online play to this PC port.

■ *Final Fantasy X-2's* Paine in a medium rare moment of repose.

WELCOME TO THE JEDI ACADEMY

YOU WILL NOT LEAVE THESE HALLS AS YOU ENTERED THEM.

YOU WILL UNLEARN ALL THAT YOU HAVE LEARNED.

DEDICATE YOUR LIFE TO A HIGHER PURPOSE.

USE THE KNOWLEDGE YOU ATTAIN HERE WISELY.

THE FORCE IS A POWERFUL ALLY. AND A TERRIBLE FOE.

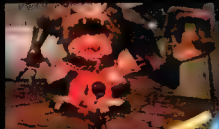
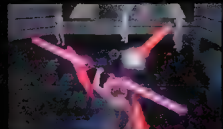
DO NOT BE SEDUCED BY THE DARK SIDE.

FOR YOU ARE THE FUTURE GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY.



STAR WARS JEDI KNIGHT: JEDI ACADEMY

You are a new student at Luke Skywalker's Jedi Academy. Continue an ancient tradition as you learn the powers and dangers of the Force. Customize your character. Construct your own lightsaber from handle to blade. And develop your fighting stance—from the classic single-blade to the rare and powerful double-bladed lightsaber. Then hone your Jedi skills in single player missions or fight it out in multiplayer modes. May the Force be with you, young Jedi.



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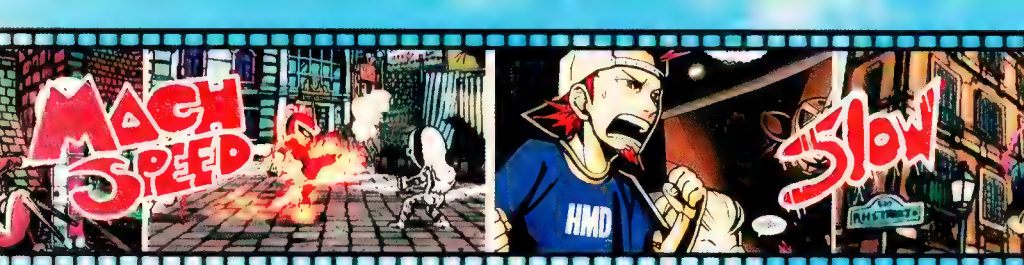
Online play requires internet connection. Players are responsible for all applicable internet fees.

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Game Experience May
Change During Online Play

Coming to
PlayStation 2



LIFE IS VIEWTIFUL

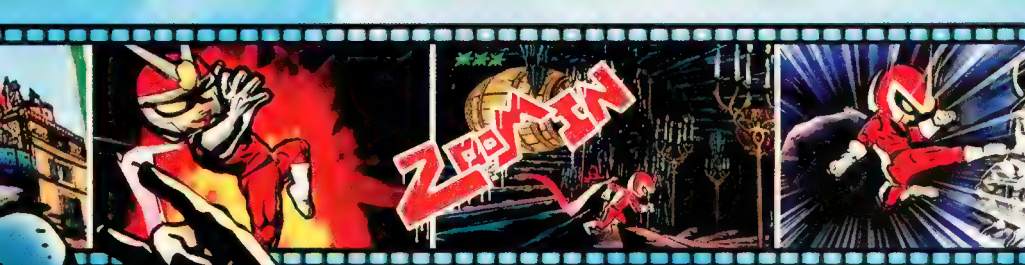
AN AVERAGE JOE CAUGHT UP IN A CRAZY STUNT-FILLED ACTION MOVIE WORLD. WITH THE AID OF HIS HERO, CAPTAIN BLUE, JOE IS GRANTED POWERS WHICH TURN HIM INTO VIEWTIFUL JOE, THE MOST STYLISH SUPERHERO TO GRACE THE SILVER SCREEN.



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Pummel opponents with over 15 weapons.



PlayStation 2



GAME BOY ADVANCE

road rash, nobody beats the Bandicoot.

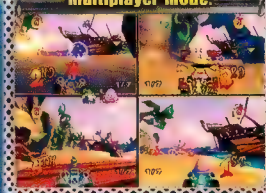


www.crashbandicoot.com

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Battle for bragging rights in multiplayer mode.



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GIMME! GIMME!

EGM guides you to the games worth scrawling on your holiday wish list

Hark! 'Tis the season to give rather than receive, eh? (But—wink, wink...nudge, nudge—we know that all you really care about this holiday is loading up on nifty game loot...and lots of it. So to help you dodge the socks, ties, novelty lamps, beaded-seat covers, and other crappy gifts you'd usually have to accept with a fat, plastic grin, we're putting together the ultimate list of top-tier 2003 games that'll put a genuine smile on your face. And we've organized them for every type of player, so you'll know exactly which games fit your needs—or what to buy for that hard-to-shop-for gamer on your list. Not that we expect you to use this guide for anything other than your own selfish reasons.)

Oh yeah, peace on earth and all that usual stuff.



Illustrations by Mikez Donovan

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE

Look for the bill-wrapped gift package to see which games just aren't complete without this extra junk...



If you want *Beyond Good & Evil*, get a **Holga Camera (\$20)**. This snappy medium-format, plastic (even the lens!) shooter is so bad it's good. If it busts, drop-kick it and nab another.



If you want *Ratchet & Clank*, get a **Spider 3 Robot (\$50 from robotstore.com)**. This assemble-yourself walking bot may not crack wise like sidekick Crank, but it's smart enough to avoid bumping into walls.

IF YOU WANNA SAVE THE WORLD...

Because adventure's your middle name (or is it Skip?)



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER
GC • Nintendo
Scores (out of 10): 10, 9.5, 10

Don't let the Saturday-morning visuals turn you off: Kid-elf Link's latest opus delivers a man-sized adventure of high-seas swashbuckling and wit-straining dungeon delving. And although it's lean on vivans to save, it does costar one ambiguously sexual gyrating man-fairy.



BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
PS2, XB, GC • Ubisoft
Scores: 8.5, 9.0, 8.0

So the French can't fight, but they sure make a spectacular action-adventure. Rife with futuristic imagery, Frenchie *Rayman* creator Michel Ancel's opus fuses several gripping gameplay styles: Ace reporter Jade snaps pictures, pilots a hovercraft, and solves puzzles with the help of portly pig chum Peyj.



RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO
PS2 • Sony CEA
Scores: 8.5, 9.5, 9.5

In the year's best platformer, our marsupial of questionable lineage and his straight-man bot bud once again save us all, only now with upgradeable arms and armor. Even if the humor is more Nickelodeon than Comedy Central, Ratchet's shtick never gets too thick.

IF YOU KNOW KUNG FU...

You're a fighter, not a lover, so vent that aggression with these brawlers



SOUL CALIBUR II
PS2, XB, GC • Namco
Scores: 10, 9.0, 10

Two out of three virtual butt-kickers swear that *Soul Cali II* delivers the slickest virtual fight club around. The sequel gets spruced with system-specific combatants (Heihachi for PS2, Spawn for Xbox, and Link for GC) and character designs by Todd McFarlane. But it's the deep combat engine that'll have you hooked. And good luck pulling yourself away from the enhanced Weapon Master mode—let alone snagging all 200 collectibles.



VIRTUA FIGHTER 4: EVOLUTION
PS2 • Sega
Scores: 10, 9.0, 9.5

And here's why one out of three virtual butt-kickers says *VF4* trumps the mighty *Soul Cali*: New characters and modes, 1,500 costume items, A.I. based on Tokyo's best players—all for a budget price. Not that you care how much your gifts cost.



GUILTY GEAR X2
PS2 • Sammy Studios
Scores: 8.0, 8.5, 8.5

Street Fighter meets *Shout at the Devil* in this heavy-metal-themed 2D fighter cut from the classic mold. The superbly animated high-kicking head-bangers unleash flashy attacks to power-chord tunes so corny that they're cool. You don't even need a mule to play.



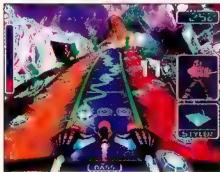
DEF JAM VENDETTA
PS2, GC • EA Games
Scores: 7.0, 8.5, 7.5

Drop elbows on the haters in this extremely playable underground brawler starring a dozen hip-hop honchos, including Scarface, NORE, and Redman. Ludicrous finishing moves add the gold plating to the game's knuckle-cracked grill. And you fight over ho's.



IF YOU GO TO BAND CAMP...

Crank these up to create your own music television



AMPLITUDE
PS2 • Sony CEA
Scores: 7.5, 8.0, 7.0

If the bubbly pop in Japanese music games doesn't give you an orgasm, crank up this rocking sequel, which belts out killer tracks from Garbage, Weezer, Run-DMC, and more. Oh, and the finger-tapping gameplay ain't so bad, either. You can even mix custom tunes and jam with others online.



DDRMAX 2 / DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION ULTRAMIX
PS2/XB • Konami
Scores: 6.5, 7.5, 9.0

Wanna school those freestylin' freaks at the arcade? You'll need a regimen of at-home *DDR*, courtesy of the new PS2 or Xbox version. Flail your feet daily to techno-rific Crystal Method or maybe the sex-hop pop of Kylie Minogue, and you'll soon have a license to groove.



KARAOKE REVOLUTION
PS2 • Konami
Scores: 8.5, 8.5, 7.5

Why venture to the local karaoke bar when Konami has captured the drunken magic of the sing-along scene for the home? With friends booning from the comfort of the couch, you're free to belt out your best "Wind Beneath Your Wings" or any of 35 other tunes. The game even judges your croonin' skills.

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE



If you want *Soul Calibur II*, get a **Todd McFarlane SC action figure (\$10)**. Better yet, collect 'em all and put on a miniproduction of *Our Town*, when no one else is around.



If you want *Karaoke Revolution*, get the **Headset Bundle (\$60)**. What good's this pop-singer simulator if you don't have a microphone to make the magic happen? This pack—\$20 pricier than the standalone game—includes a deluxe Logitech headset mic, allowing for totally hands-free rockin'.

"AND MY FIRST HOLIDAY DUTY, MAKING SURE VIEWTIFUL JOE IS IN THIS GUIDE. LOOK, IF YOU LIKE FANCY BRAWLIN', YOU GOTTA PUT THIS CUBE HIT ON YER DAMN LIST."



IF YOU WANT TO GO COMMANDO...

That lazy eye keeping you out of the army? Fight the fake fight instead



SOCOM II: U.S. NAVY SEALS

PS2 • Sony CEA
Scores: 9.0, 9.0, 9.5

You'll have a dangerously good time strategically trouncing terrorists in a dozen real-world military missions, but these solo forays into Albania, Algeria, Brazil, and Russia serve only as practice for the big dance: online combat. Added Breach and Escort game modes—plus the new rocket launchers, shotguns, and turrets—make this the most heavily armed and lethally fun online shooter you'll find on the consoles.



FREEDOM FIGHTERS

PS2, XB, GC • EA Games
Scores: 7.5, 8.5, 8.0

Are you the kind of red-blooded American who eats freedom fries with his apple pie? Then it's your sworn duty to enlist in this balls-out blaster, in which you lead a squad of lethally crafty rebels on a mission to kick the commie trash out of New York City. Wolverines!



TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3

XB • Ubisoft
Scores: 9.0, 7.5, 9.0

Shoot first, ask, "How cool was that?" later. Combat terrorism by getting all tactical with a crew of elite operatives in this shooter, which is as realistic as it is stunning. Multiplayer support and voice-activated commands keep it right on target.



THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING

PS2, XB, GC • EA Games
Scores: 8.5, 8.5, 8.0

So the war of the ring isn't the same as the war on terrorism, but the bloody battlefields in this cinematic brawler are nevertheless chaotic enough to guarantee serious post-traumatic stress disorder. This game'll put hair on your feet.

IF YOU WANT TO SCORE...

Couples who play together, play together (wink, wink)



BOMBLASTIC

PS2 • Capcom
Scores: 8.0, 7.5, 8.5

Imagine a combo-crazy puzzle game. Now add tanker-truck-style explosions. In *Bomblastic*, you do your damndest to arrange explosive dice and skeddadle before your adorable demons go out in a blaze of glory. Your girl will think it's the cutest thing since Hello Kitty waffles—until you make her explode.



THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT

PS2, XB, GC • EA Games
Scores: 8.5, 9.0, 9.0

You want to play *SOCOM*. She wants to watch *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. Avoid a domestic disturbance with this sequel, which nurtures her nesting instinct while adding an entire neighborhood and zanier careers. The PS2 version has online play to simulate intimacy in long-distance relationships.



MARIO PARTY 5

GC • Nintendo
Scores: 8.0, 8.0, 8.0

Her folks paying a visit? Be the hero and break out the board-games antics of Mario and co., who are way more entertaining than an embarrassing round of Porno Password. Like every previous *Party*, this bash is stocked with thumb-hurtin' minigames. Goes great with Chex Mix and margaritas.



THE COMPLETE PACKAGE



If you want *SOCOM*, get a **Richard Marcinko figure (\$40)**. Blue Box Toys' foot-tall SEALs have black belts in kung-fu grip, but none of them tops legendary warrior Richard Marcinko in gung-ho manliness. His friends call him Dick. His enemies call him—**BLAM!** Thump.



If you want *Return of the King*, get **The Two Towers Special Extended Edition DVD (\$40)**. We're talkin' four discs, 40 extra minutes of movie, and the right to ridicule those impatient saps who already bought the nonextended version.

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IF YOU JUST CAN'T TAKE IT SLOW...

Your Dodge Dart not doing the job? Drop the hammer in these hot rods



MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!

GC • Nintendo
Scores: 10, 10, 9.5

If the speed doesn't kill you, an errant turtle shell will. Two-man teams of renowned Nintendo mascots tear ass around Mushroom Kingdom's high-ways and byways. Battle arenas, power-ups, 16-player support via a broadband adapter—the latest in the *Kart* series became one of our all-time favorite multiplayer games overnight. Four-player options on a single machine are more than enough to make this the best Kwanzaa ever.



PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

XB • Microsoft
Scores: 9.5, 9.5, 9.5

Online competitions in this postcard-pretty racer will floor you. The expanded car roster and Kudos reward system—in which taking chances nets big payoffs—aren't bad either. But powersliding past the Sears Tower? That's priceless.



NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND

PS2, XB, GC • EA Games
Scores: 8.5, 8.5, 9.0

Speed junkies will find instant gratification as they tool around neon-drenched night courses at full throttle. Kit out licensed imports, then take them online (PS2 version only) for some real competition. And possibly some real motion sickness.



MIDNIGHT CLUB 2

PS2, XB • Rockstar
Scores: 9.0, 8.0, 9.5

Breakin' the law? Think about breakin' the sound barrier instead. Exercise your speed demons while tearing through illegal racing circuits on the streets of L.A., Paris, and Tokyo. Nonlinear play and online compatibility ensure you won't run out of gas.

IF YOU SLAY THE DRAGON...

The party's right here (20-sided die not included)



FINAL FANTASY X-2

PS2 • Square Enix
Scores: 9.5, 9.5, 8.5

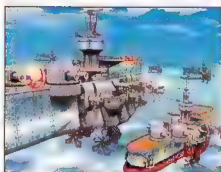
Ignore the bubbly laughs—this first true sequel in the *Final Fantasy* series might just kick your ass. Unlike the gals in your sister's *Barbie* horse-riding games, X-2's barely legal pop-singing trio is hell in anime treads, favoring mission-based combat to a dinner-and-a-movie date with local Spira boys.



STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

XB • LucasArts
Scores: 10, 9.5, 9.0

Think of those hours wasted in line for *Episode I* and *II* as some kind of Jedi penance for this super *Star Wars* experience. From BioWare, the titans of PC role-playing games, it's an epic tale of the Old Republic, set 4,000 years before Jar Jar cracked his first poop joke.



SKIES OF ARCADIA: LEGENDS

GC • Sega
Scores: 9.0, 9.5, 9.0

If you're grumbling that you played this classy RPG back in 2000 when it was originally released on the now-defunct Dreamcast, stop whining! *Legends* is an uber-revamp of all things *Arcadia*: fresh characters, brave new worlds, and a bulkier, fleshed-out script. Besides, airships are friggin' cool!

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE



If you want *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!*, get a Featherlight Portable Scooter (\$1,895 from www.electricscooter.com). You'll be

hell on wheels at the local bingo parlor or all-you-can-eat buffet abroad. This stylish, 4 mph speedster. A crutch/cane holder is just \$25 extra.



If you want *KOTOR*, get the *Tales of the Jedi* graphic novels from Dark Horse Comics (\$15 each). Set shortly before the events of the game, these stories will get you up to speed but are sadly devoid of gratuitous Bastila shower scenes.



when's the last time
mail got you this excited?

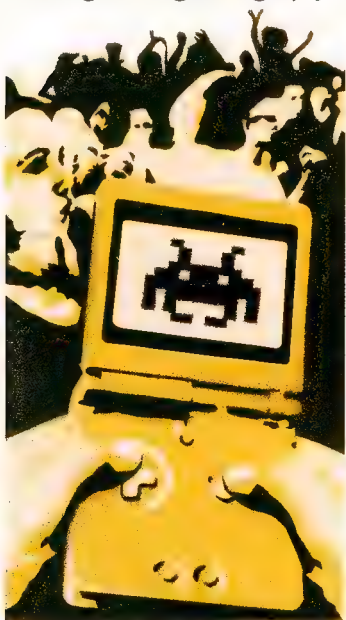
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rent smart. play harder.

IF YOU GO OUT ON THE TOWN...

Videogames goofing up your social schedule? Take them with you



WARIO WARE: MEGA MICROGAMES

GBA • Nintendo
Scores: 9.5, 9.0, 9.0

Had it up to here with games that take 40-plus hours to complete? Then you'll find these 3-to-5-second mega minigames much more manageable—and perfect for the morning commute. This fast-paced, finger-tapping twitchfest will make your head spin, but in a good way. Help Wario and his weird pals thread needles, pick noses, eat hot dogs, and do hundreds of other decidedly odd jobs for the attention-span impaired.



CASTLEVANIA: ARIA OF SORROW

GBA • Konami
Scores: 9.5, 9.5, 9.0

It's a good thing vampires never seem to die—otherwise we might see an end to the best action series on GBA. This thematic departure for the franchise finds pretty-boy Soma trapped inside Drac's creepy castle in the year 2035.



SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 4: SUPER MARIO BROS. 3

GBA • Nintendo
Scores: 9.5, 9.0, 9.5

Originally released for the Nintendo Entertainment System, this side-scrolling masterwork has all of the classic levels and secrets—and the fuzzy feelings that come with them. Now you can unlock new levels with the e-Reader.



FINAL FANTASY TACTICS ADVANCE

GBA • Square Enix
Scores: 9.0, 9.0, 9.0

Even if you're a veteran of the PS1 original, you'll still want to dive into this high-gloss pseudo-sequel. The gameplay is as deep as ever, yet it's still approachable for the newbies. The plot actually makes some damn sense this time, too.

IF YOU PLAY WELL WITH OTHERS...

Hook up with real people online...then crush them



CRIMSON SKIES: HIGH ROAD TO REVENGE

XB • Microsoft
Scores: 9.0, 9.0, 8.5

If you think prop-powered dogfighting won't get your pulse soaring, your fly-boy scarf must be on too tight. *Crimson Skies'* online modes let 16-player air forces turn and burn in strategic new ways. Log on and we guarantee you'll rack up major frequent-flyer mileage.



TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND

PS2, XB, GC • Activision
Scores: 10, 9.0, 9.0

Not only has the *Tony Hawk* world expanded into *Grand Theft Auto*-style free-roaming neighborhoods, but now skaters everywhere can band together online (PS2 version only), mold their faces onto their aspiring Z-Boys, and trade custom levels, personally stylized boards, and knee-scrapping tricks.



PHANTASY STAR ONLINE: EPISODE I & II

XB, GC • Sega
Scores: 9.0, 9.0, 9.0

Wow—online roleplaying without the monotony! Dumping those *EverQuest*-style hours of aimless wandering into the deep-space trash chute, *PSO* hooks players in another, more visceral way: by delivering trigger-happy, sword-slashing four-player cooperative fun.

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE



If you want any GBA games, get a **Game Boy Player (\$60)**. Because you'll eventually need to come

home for hangover recovery, and this GBA adapter for your GameCube makes those little handheld games a lot easier on your bloodshot eyes.



If you want *Tony Hawk's Underground*, get the **Tony Hawk's Trick TIPS DVD set (\$30)**. Play *T.H.U.G.* all

you want—you won't be any closer to nailing a real-life 360° Heellip Sacktap. This instructional three-disc set will push you in the right direction. Lesson one: Don't crack your coccyx.



50

40

30

20

10

Welcome



This is the Asphalt Arena.

The real artificial turf. It's a hundred-yard long stage.

You got the goods to headline here?

Hundreds of NFL superstars and legends are waiting in
junkyards and vacant lots to see you prove it.

Forget your helmet and rulebook, wanna be. Style rules at this party.

Through-the-leg pitches and behind-the-back passes.

Just bring whatever you got to keep the ball moving.

Cuz on the street, the only thing more important than
dominating is looking good doing it.



IF YOU GO THE **WHOLE NINE YARDS...**

Take five from pounding on nerds and relax with some armchair athletics



MADDEN NFL 2004

PS2, XB, GC, PS1 • EA Sports
Scores: 9.5, 9.0, 9.5

No sports holiday would be merry without the latest *Madden*. This year's edition is the best yet, as no other football game provides a greater sense of onfield control, and truly devoted pigskin fans will love the beefed-up Franchise mode. Plus, online play (PS2 version only) receives the necessary upgrades of voice chat and tourneys. Don't drop the trash talk until you hear your opponent's sob's—then blast him with an air horn!



TOP SPIN

XB • Microsoft
Scores: 9.0, 9.0, 9.0

A near-perfect blend of brisk arcade gameplay (an homage to Sega's *Virtual Tennis* series) and center-court authenticity, Microsoft's online-enabled tennis title serves up a grand slam that's even more exciting than box-cover star Anna Kournikova in a bikini. Well, almost.



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004

PS2, XB, GC • EA Sports
Scores: 9.0, 9.5, 9.0

Tiger Woods has not only attracted the hip crowd to the plaid-pants sport, he's also the catalyst for the only golf experience that appeals to hardcore putters and amateurs alike. Even if you despise golf, this game will hook you.



NBA STREET: VOL. II

PS2, XB, GC • EA Sports Big
Scores: 8.5, 9.5, 8.5

The *NBA Street* series ups the urban ante by taking b-ball to the blacktop and leaving the rules—and gravity—back at the arena. But that doesn't mean the pros don't come out to play in this NBA-sanctioned game. They just take themselves less seriously.



IF YOU **BLAST TO THE PAST...**

They *do* make ninjas and Drac slayers like they used to



NINJA GAIDEN

XB • Tecmo
Scores: Reviewed next issue
Ninja star Ryu Hayabusa has made ass-kicking caroms in the *Dead or Alive* series for a while, but he's always played second banana to his more well-endowed opponents. With katana firmly gripped, the man of the shadows finally returns to his 8-bit glory days—with stunning results on Xbox.



PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

PS2, XB, GC • Ubisoft
Scores: 9.5, 9.0, 9.5
This sandy franchise revival is anything but bland, taking the classic series platforming punch to *Matrix*-revved overdrive. The Prince's time-fiddling effects—enemy freeze, rewind, etc.—make this state-of-the-art action romp one of the holiday's slickest surprises.



CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE

PS2 • Konami
Scores: 8.0, 7.5, 7.5
Simon Belmont, Richter, Alucard—names that give you a tingle in your special place. And this 3D *Castlevania* delivers the 2D games' classic elements: astounding visuals, a soaring soundtrack, tons of secrets, and a whole lotta whip-it-good action.



If you want *NBA Street*, get *Michael Jordan's Come Fly With Me* VHS tape (\$9 from www.amazon.com). See Michael Jordan before he was bald and had a gimpy knee. Magical.

If you want any games with retro heroes, get the *Once Upon Atari* DVD series (\$30 from www.scottw.com). Relive the glorious, pioneering, pot-hazed "bad old days" of Atari game design, hosted by a man who was there—infamous old-school designer Howard Scott Warshaw, the man who made *E.T.*



TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Comic Mischief
Mild Language
Mild Violence
Suggestive Themes

www.us.playstation.com

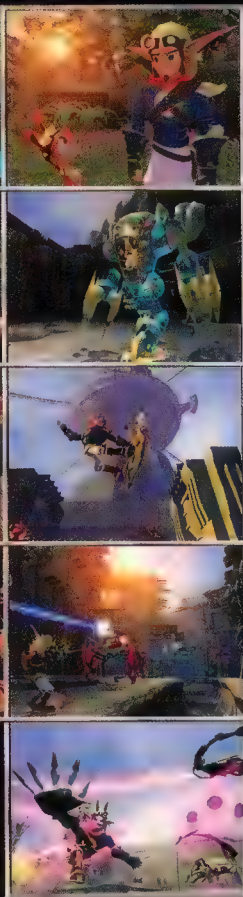
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JAK II



THIS WORLD IS
BETTER LEFT TO JAK.

It ain't no namby pamby fair land, pal. It's a whole new kind of evil. Crawling with ruthless dictators, backstabbing allies, and blood-thirsty freaks with an appetite for extra rare meat. All punies kindly tippy toe on out of here. This requires someone with serious ass-kicking savvy. And that someone, my friend, is Jak. This time he's pissed off and battle ready, with a frighteningly large gun, get-the-hell-outta-my-way hoverboard and a nasty case of mutant powers. So please, save yourself the detached appendages and let him handle it.



NAUGHTY DOG

PlayStation 2



LIVE IN YOUR WORLD.
PLAY IN OURS.

Foreign Ambassadors Report Peaceful Face-to-Face Negotiations with Terrorists in Venezuela

By Michael Golden
GLOBAL PRESS NETWORK

was relieved that the situation did not turn violent despite the heightened tensions between the two sides. As of yet, no

Venezuela - A government official from a



LEAD AN ELITE COUNTER-TERRORIST UNIT IN ITS BATTLE TO PROTECT THE INNOCENT.



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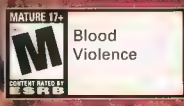
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RAINBOW SIX 3



UBISOFT

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FOR XBOX AND PLAYSTATION®2



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ITS SEQUEL BORDERS ON SOMETHING MORE: ART."
TIME MAGAZINE

DEVELOPED BY:



PlayStation 2

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Grand Theft Auto

double
pack

grand theft auto III & grand theft auto *vice city*



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VERSION BY:



Violence
Strong Language
Blood and Gore
Strong Sexual Content



Note: Rockstar will be following ESRB guidelines for M rated games in the marketing of this game. This game contains violent language and behavior and may not be appropriate for persons under the age of 17. It is a comic interpretation of gangster activity and the story, names and incidents portrayed herein are fictitious. No identification or similarity to actual persons, living or dead, or to actual events is intended or should be inferred. Any resemblance is coincidental. The names and publishers of this videogame do not in any way endorse, condone or encourage this kind of behavior.



review crew

your monthly guide to gaming's winners and losers

THE RATING SYSTEM

Each reviewer assigns an overall grade to each game, on a scale from 0 to 10. When a game receives a 10, you can rest assured that it's one of the best games ever made, a classic that will endure throughout the ages. Conversely, when a game gets a 0.0, it is complete and utter crap and should be treated like a deadly biohazard. We utilize the entire scale, so a game that gets a 5.0 is average, which means not bad. **We repeat: 5.0 IS AVERAGE.** The scores are color coded, so the brighter the red, the better the game.



OUR AWARDS

				
Platinum Awards go to games that get all 10s, the ultimate review a game can get.	Gold Awards go to games with an average score of 9.0 or higher. Quality stuff.	Silver Awards go to games that average at least an 8.0 (but are lower than 9.0).	This honor is bestowed upon the highest-reviewed game each month. A worthy buy.	This dishonor goes to the worst game each month that gets unanimously bad scores.

ESRB KEY (Also check out www.esrb.com)

EC-Early Childhood Games bearing this mark are suited for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.	E-Everyone Wholesome fun for the whole family, devoid of profanity, head shots, or levels of violence.	T-Teen Like PG-13 movies, teen games feature mild violence and "comic mischief."	M-Mature Whereas these games offer all the sors, sex, drugs, and fun of R-rated fare.	AO-Adults Only A rare find. No game's ever been seen as AO since <i>Terminator</i> on 3DO.
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GAME OF THE MONTH



■ PAGE 150

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

Microsoft delivers a fantastic update of its premier racing simulation—sexy cars, beautiful cities, and revolutionary Xbox Live features make it a must-buy title for gearheads.

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■ Fo' shizzle: Unlockable character Snop Dagg gets all the ladies. Sorry, Nick.



■ C'mon, when the heck are L.A. streets ever this empty?

■ PS2, XB, GC

TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF L.A.

Big trouble in little Compton

BRYAN: As the attack of the *GTA* clones continues, *True Crime* sets itself apart by staying on the good side of the law (you're a cop and taking place in a real town [Los Angeles]). The sprawling environments that you'll patrol as resident-tough-guy-with-a-badge Nick Kang are bull's-eye representations of L.A., to the point where I can cruise around and instantly recognize my old stomping grounds. And while you're treated to only four different types of missions (driving, shooting, stealth, and hand-to-hand combat), the character-upgrade system helps keep the gameplay fresh throughout.

Still, *True Crime* fails to offer *GTA*-quality thrills. Its so-so, styleless graphics fail to impress, and the whole thing's too short and easy. Instead of requiring a tough 40 hours to finish (like *Vice City*), it will take only the weekend to see all three endings and complete all of the training sessions. And what's with the story? It takes a downright puzzling and

pointless detour straight outta *Big Trouble in Little China*—who knew SoCal was home to dragons?

Ultimately, *True Crime* is a passable first effort, but hopefully, the inevitable sequel will be better.

GREG ■ *True Crime* isn't just some wannabe cash-in—it takes the general idea behind *Grand Theft Auto* and builds something truly original around it. It feels like the evolution of the genre in a lot of ways, not least of all graphically. This game's nice, detailed characters and cars put *Vice City*'s to shame, and the city is freakin' huge.

My favorite thing about *True Crime*, though, is the sheer variety of missions you tackle during the story. Sometimes you're tailing it suspect, other times you're sneaking around warehouses *Metal Gear*-style, engaging in massive shoot-outs à la *Max Payne*, or laying the smack down with a little fisticuffs. And the best part is, no matter what part

of the game you're in, it controls wonderfully. Overall, this is one incredibly polished game.

JON ■ I hope someone someday makes a game based on a normal cop with below-average marksmanship, a marginal work ethic, and a family of four. At least it would be original. *True Crime*'s Nick is the last straw—I can't take another rogue cop whose unorthodox methods somehow get the job done. A slew of short, uninspired missions conjure all the latest trends in gaming—*Max Payne* and *Crazy Taxi* reversion in what feels like a diluted, arcade version of *GTA3*. If your ADD is flaring up, you'll be in heaven with the flip-flopping styles. But the increased variety means an *Iron Duke* drop in gameplay quality. It has its moments, but *True Crime* also has that empty feeling that comes from being nurtured by a marketing meeting rather than a developer's vision.



L.A.: The City of Demons

Activision and developer Luxoflux must have connections within Los Angeles' seedy underground. How else would they know that fire-breathing dragons, hovering demon heads, and 342-year-old Chinese men inhabit the city. Simply complete episode six and you can check it out for yourself. And you know it's gotta be real, right? Why else would they call the game *True Crime*?



Good: Superaccurate City of Angels
Bad: You'll solve this crime all too quickly.
Celeb. Cast: Michelle Rodriguez and Christopher Walken



THE CRITICS REACT	6.5	9.5	5.5
	BRYAN	GREG S.	JON D.

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Luxoflux
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

www.truecrimea.com



PS2, XB

GLADIATOR: SWORD OF VENGEANCE

Caveat emptor

Good: Fools be gettin' sliced.
Bad: No difficulty setting? WTF?
Dumb: Skeletons straight outta D&D's *Monster Manual*

PAUL: Armed with a sword (natch), an ax, and bladed gauntlets, *Gladiator's* heroic Thrax cuts a bloody swath through the realms of the afterlife, seeking to prove his worth to the gods. Offensively, Thrax kicks ass: He switches between targets with ease, strengthens his attacks with magic, and earns damage multipliers by performing stylish combos. His defense, however, desperately needs work. Thrax can't block (although all his foes can), while the vagaries of his dodge maneuver make it nearly useless.

Gladiator features some cool enemies, such as the gorillalike cyclopes and a boss who looks like a union between the smoke wraiths from *Ico* (PS2) and *Soul Calibur's* Voldo (trust me—it works). But most people won't stick around to notice those nice touches, because the game is stupidly, punishingly difficult. And its save "system," pardon my Latin, blows syllabic goats. It saves automatically at arbitrary points—and doesn't tell you. When you die, you find out you have to redo the last 20 minutes of combat. Bad-tempered gamers beware, lest you become wrath and smite your controllers.

JOE: If you seek a straightforward (read: dumb) action game to kill some time with, you'll find *Gladiator* sure, but the bill fairly well. It's a button masher, sure, but it's one with pretty graphics, upgradeable abilities, and buckets of blood violence. If only the game's respawn points didn't set you so far back and its challenges weren't so teeth-grindingly difficult, *Gladiator* would be worth more than just a rental. As it stands, this hack-n-slasher recalls from the same-named film one of Commodus' lines: "It vexes me. I'm terribly vexed."

OFFICIAL PS MAG—CHRIS B: *Gladiator's* first 15 minutes are absolutely enthralling, as of Thraxie boy does his gladiator thing against actual gladiators in an actual gladiatorial arena. I hate false advertising. Once our hero hits Fantasyland, you realize just how crappy the combat system is—even when you do well, the overuse of particle effects surrounding Thrax means you can't even see him as you fight. And while I don't find the save system as detrimental as Paul does, the obscene difficulty and ill-adviced respawning locations really do blow.



THE VERDICTS (out of 10)	6.0	6.0
	PAUL	CHRIS B.

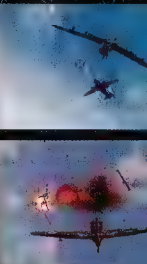
Publisher: Acclaim
 Developer: Acclaim Manchester
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Mature

www.acclaim.com

PS2, XB

SECRET WEAPONS OVER NORMANDY

Beats watching the History Channel



Good: Top-flight graphics and presentation
Bad: Some confounding missions
From the Guy Behind: *X-Wing* vs. *TIE Fighter* on PC

CRISMAN: Take EA's *Medal of Honor* WWII shooter series, bolt wings on it, and set it soaring high in the sky, and you have *Secret Weapons Over Normandy*. It has the same ultrahistorical presentation, with precision pseudohistorical footage, a rousing orchestrated score, and visuals as pretty as the wild blue yonder. And, for the most part, the gameplay here is just as thrilling. You'll barnstorm prisoner-of-war camps, sink Japanese carriers, and fly cover for ground-based friendlies—with lots of dogfighting in between, of course.

Just don't expect to tangle with many crazy opponents; enemy squadrons rely on sheer numbers rather than ace piloting to chew up your six. And if the bogeys get uppity, you can slip into slow-mo aerial bullet time and pepper them at your leisure—an ability that makes the game a bit of a cinch. Still, unlike *Shawn*, I never thought the sorties got blah, although the lack of targeting and view options makes for confusing moments. But ultimately, why must you wait so long to fly secret experimental planes in a game with the words "secret weapons" in its title?

SHAWN: *Secret Weapons* sacrifices authenticity for fun. Historians will scoff at the impossible payloads, and accomplished flyboys will wonder where gravity went, but I'd rather outmaneuver enemy aces and dive-bomb Axis depots than actually learn to fly. Vast environments and vibrant effects capture the magnitude of air combat, and, for the first half of the game, varied missions keep the action interesting. After a dozen sorties, however,

it gets old, and all but the most patient pilots will want to poop the canopy.

JON D: *Secret's* bullet-time clock manipulation is a marginally cool idea, but I still found myself using it primarily to speed up my flight, which only meant enemies were blowing up my allies several times faster than normal. This is definitely not one for hardcore flight fans—the graphics are subpar, the physics nonexistent, and the missions pretty pedestrian. I could see flight newbies glomming on to *Secret's* "lite" war-sim approach, but you'll find better dogfighting elsewhere.



Friendly skies: Two players can take to wing together in cooperative missions.

THE VERDICTS (out of 10)	7.5	6.5	5.0
	CRISPIN	SHAWN	JON D.

Publisher: LucasArts
 Developer: Totally Games
 Players: 1-2
 ESRB: Teen

www.lucasarts.com

BAPTIZED IN
BLOOD,
A FAMILY'S
**FRAGILE
DESTINY**
IS BORN.



At the dawn of the second millennium, the first Belmont makes the ultimate sacrifice. And the destiny of a bloodline is decided. From the creators of Castlevania® Symphony of the Night™ and completely reinvented for its 3D debut on PlayStation®2, Castlevania® Lament of Innocence™ reveals the true origins of the vampire-hunting Belmonts and their tireless quest for Vlad Dracula. A thousand years ago, a legend was indeed born. And the dying hasn't stopped since.



Konami's classic adventure series looks drop dead gorgeous in 3D and plays brilliantly. - PSM

This game's at work here and simply magical. - PLAY

What does it actually feel like to play? Damned, yes. - EGM

Castlevania

Lament of Innocence



PlayStation 2

KONAMI
www.konami.com/usa



How come massless never drive normal-sized tires, like the rest of us?

PS2, XB, GC

CRASH NITRO KART

This kart needs a tune-up



(Left) The multiplayer action isn't as fun as it looks. (Right) Hope you really like neon colors.

Good: Controls well enough
Bad: Multiplayer modes lack intensity
Crash: And burn



FORD: Crash is an interesting beast. Not in a bandicoot sense, but in regard to his new karting gig. For everything *Nitro Kart* does right, it does something frustratingly wrong—not the least of which is being released alongside the new *Mario Kart*.

CNK's Adventure mode delivers harmless single-player action, with interesting stuff such as boss challenges and team aspects, but it becomes annoying when you're forced to replay tracks with non-sensical requirements. For example, trying to finish in first while picking up arbitrarily placed letters or smashing clock-topping boxes doesn't make for a good time.

The boost system—in which you link boosts by catching air, hitting pads, and powersliding—is another failed attempt at innovation. Having to press two buttons for the powersliding boost is just clunky.

And then there's the multiplayer. Two-player cup races are enjoyable, but three- and four-player bouts lack intensity, thanks to bigger-than-necessary maps, ineffective weapons, and slower-than-normal game-play. *Nitro Kart* doesn't offer the fast-paced, fluid fun I expect from a kart racer.

DEMIAN: Poor Crash. The little guy keeps pumping those stumpy marsupial legs, but he's still miles behind Mario—or in this case, *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!* (GC). *Crash Nitro Kart* is a fairly limp effort, aside from a whole bunch of new tracks and better graphics, not much has been done to update the series. The gameplay feels nearly identical to *Crash Team Racing's* (PS1), even down to the speed-boosting wumpa fruits, so if you loved it before, you'll still love it, and if not...not.

XBN—GREG O: The unflavored yogurt of the kart-racing set, *Crash Nitro Kart* has its heart in the right place. Sadly, said heart is stillborn. Powered by the charismatic Crash Bandicoot and featuring a solid multiplayer mode, *CNK* takes few chances; it's as generic in look as it is in feel. *CNK* offers standard weapons, predictably themed tracks with lots of jumps but few hairpin curves to challenge drivers, and a toned-down difficulty level to keep frustrating losses to a minimum. Oh, and what's with the lamest unlockable ever: the ability to rewatch cut-scenes?

THE VERDICTS
OUT OF 10

5.5	6.0	5.5
G. FORD	DEMIAN	GREG O.

Publisher: VU Games
 Developer: Vicarious Visions
 Players: XB, GC: 1-4
 PS2: 1-2 (2-4 w/ Multipl)
 ESRB: Everyone

www.vugames.com

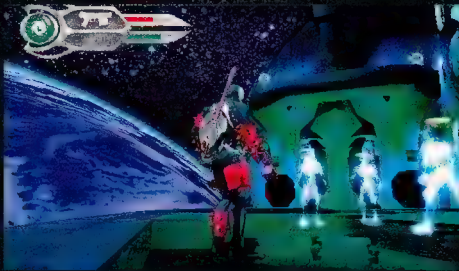


Spawn's signature cape stays tucked away most of the time...we're not sure where, exactly.

PS2, XB, GC

SPAWN: ARMAGEDDON

Don't cut a deal with this devil



Don't dare to go where hellspawn has gone before—to the bleeding edge of sci-fi stupidity.

Good: Better than the PS1 *Spawn* game
Bad: Dull graphics and derivative gameplay
Fear: Laughable enemies, like Bullydozer



SHAWN: He's a demon who'd rather do good than the devil's bidding, and if that sounds familiar, you haven't heard the half of it. A gun in each hand and a blade on his back, Spawn hunts escapees from hell, harvesting souls to spend on power-ups. You could call it *Devil May Spawn*, but *Armageddon* doesn't compare to the game it shamelessly copies.

The action isn't bad—just appallingly generic. Spawn's symbiotic costume and profane powers could've been put to mere clever use than what you get here: fireballs and obligatory bullet time. And it's hard to be enthusiastic about fighting endless waves of cornball fiends seemingly

snaatched from the margins of some fifth-grader's math homework. One of the bosses, for example, is a demented, silly-looking bulldozer with a perverse compulsion to expose his one weak spot. And before you accuse me of singling out Bullydozer's monumentally bad design, I should add that there's an ape with a robotic arm (perhaps for hurling feces at lethal velocity?). Even those who are hard up for high-flying action should find their fix elsewhere.

JOHN R: My first impression of *Spawn* was not a good one; I've never been a fan of the comic, and I'm one of the few who wasn't all that enamored with *Devil May Cry*, the game it very obviously draws its inspiration from. Now, after spending the six hours it took me to finish the game, I can at least confirm that it's the best *Spawn* outing to date...which isn't saying much. *Armageddon's* got a nice engine and good controls, but the levels are dull, the action is repetitive, and the camera can be a real pain. A rental at best.

OFFICIAL PS NAG—SCOOTER: *Spawn* went from bad to worse for me. While I applauded the absurdity of things such as the Spider-Tank and the Bullydozer bosses, I'm depressed by the cliché "puzzles," the horrid level design (some levels are literally a bare room with respawning enemies), and the megaboring action. I stopped reading *Spawn* when that stupid cyborg gorilla Cy-Gor first appeared (issue #40). I should have followed my youthful instinct and bailed when Cy-Gor appeared in the game, since it just went downhill from there.

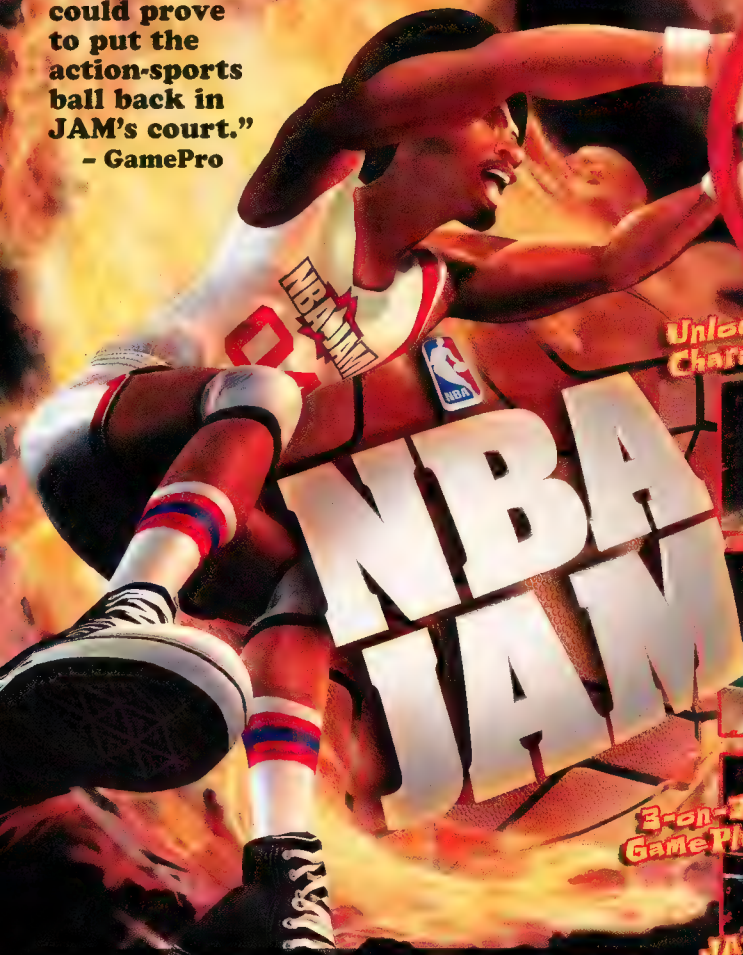
THE VERDICTS
OUT OF 10

5.0	6.0	5.5
SHAWN	JOHN R.	SCOOTER

Publisher: Namco
 Developer: Point of View
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Mature

www.namco.com

"...some mad 3-on-3
basketball that
could prove
to put the
action-sports
ball back in
JAM's court."
- GamePro



NBA JAM

Unlockable
Characters



"On-Fire"



50
NBA
Legends

3-on-3
Game Play



JAW-DROPPING
Monster JAM!!!

SLAMMAJAMMA THROW DOWN THE HAMMA MADSKILLIN' CROWD THRILLIN' D-U-N-K-S...

NOW THAT'S WHAT YOU CALL A LITTLE SUMPMP SUMPMP, SUPERFLY.
Classic NBA JAM gameplay is back: * Hotspots * Current & Classic NBA Arenas * Playground
Courts * Funkadelic Tracks * NBA Legends Tournament * "Colorful" Commentary

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PlayStation 2



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Iron Man is confounded by his strangest adventure yet—on-foot action in a goat-filled world gone mad.

PS2, XB, GC

PS2 ONLY

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND

The daily grind ain't so bad



G. FORD: For each of the last four years, the *Tony Hawk* series has given us the best action-sports games on the planet. But amidst the acclaim have been mutterings of its formula growing stale. If fans are gonna lay down 50 beans each year, they want more. Well, Neversoft has made some strides by putting old-man Hawk on the sidelines in favor of you. By either incorporating your digital mug into the game (PS2 version only) or using the more-than-adequate Create-a-Skater mode, you star in *THUG*'s impressive Story mode. The idea of a narrative in a skating game may seem odd, but it works well here. You start as a no-name skateboarder from New Jersey with aspirations of one day becoming a pro. By catching the eyes of pros, joining a team, and getting sponsored, you see your dream come to fruition. It's quite compelling and a welcome change.

But two things keep *THUG*'s score down. First, besides Hawaii, none of the levels stand out as overly memorable. Second, while *THUG* offers some

innovation, it remains fundamentally the same game. So, if you're sick of grinding a bench, manuling into a half-pipe, and then pulling off a McTwist, this won't bring you back. But if that's not the case, don't hesitate to head underground.

JENNIFER: Even a 9.0 feels low for a *Tony Hawk* game. This franchise's life-affirming combo system, thrilling levels, and bulletproof gameplay continue to dazzle, year after year. *THUG*'s newfangled Story mode is truly compelling (my skater really looks like me!). I also enjoyed getting off my deck to reach new heights—literally, and figuratively with all the new combo possibilities. Plus, cool multiplayer modes—especially the new Firefight—will keep you on your little bruised toes online.

So why ain't I lettin' the platinum love flow? Fundamentally, *Hawk* hasn't evolved enough. It's still basically a laundry list of goals, and the levels, though well designed and fun, feel recycled; they just don't take my breath away like last year's. And

am I the only one who thinks the "extreme" ambience (once so very übercool) is getting a tad passé?

GMR—MILKMAN: The thing that makes *THUG* so damn good is that it allows for infinite customization, all of which is uploadable to Neversoft's servers (on the must-have PS2 version). What this means is that if you should ever grow tired of making your own skaters, moves, parks, and events, you can always download everyone else's creations. Since the control is as tight as ever and the graphics the best the series has seen yet, I don't wait to gleam the cube in Greg's Boston Brewery Theme Park. And should Greg lose interest in playing as himself, he can download SkateMilky (complete with exclusive, face-melting guitar-solo moves) and the New York 4Ever park and see what it's like to really grind. If that isn't awesome, I don't know what is.

The More Things Change: While the various versions of *THUG* are similar, some key differences pop up between them. Only PS2 owners get to partake in the face-mapping goodness and online play (via Xbox Live support—ugh, shame!). As for controls, Sony's DualShock pad seems made for this game. Manuals are a breeze to pull off. Given the choice, the PS2 version is the way to go.

Creating a Monster

By far one of *THUG*'s coolest features is the ability to put your face onto a created character (PS2 version only). After taking a face-on digital mug shot of yourself (making sure the lighting is even across it), e-mail it to Neversoft to receive a code that lets you download your image from its servers. Once this is done, follow these steps, as demonstrated by our own Ms. Tsao.

<p>1 First, mark key points on your face—eyes, nose, and mouth—per the instructions</p>	<p>2 Next, fiddle with these color sliders until your skin tone matches the color around it.</p>	<p>3 Now the fun begins. Even wonder what you'd look like with purple liberty spikes?</p>	<p>4 If the whole process pisses you off, go all Hulk—or, in Jen's case, all She-Hulk.</p>
--	---	--	---

Good: Story mode starring you.
Bad: Still the same old, *Hawk* formula.
Skate: Or die trying.



THE VERDICTS (out of 10)

9.0	9.0	10
G. FORD	JENNIFER	MILKMAN

Developer: Activision
Developer: Neversoft
Players: 1-2
(2-8 online PS2 only)
ESRB: Teen

www.activision.com

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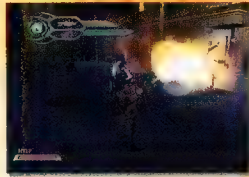
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PlayStation 2

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ESPN COLLEGE HOOPS

No trip to the big dance this year

Good: Deep recruiting system.
Bad: Plays too much like an NBA game.
Fun: Trying out the mascot teams.



BRYAN: ESPN Videogames arguably delivers today's best pro basketball offering, yet misses the mark when it comes to the university hardwood. By no means is *ESPN College Hoops* a poor showing, but it does falter in some key areas. For starters, the graphics aren't up to par with those in *ESPN NBA Basketball*, and the camera is too slow when panning around after a change in possession (totally disrupting the natural upbeat tempo of fast breaks). Also, teams rarely play a true college brand of ball; most squads won't ever attempt to pressure or trap the ball handler, both of which are very prominent in EA's game.

One area *ESPN College Hoops* succeeds big time in is recruiting. Almost nothing is more important in college athletics, and here it's given its just due. Throughout the season, you'll continually scout and converse with players via e-mail. The whole process is so involving it's practically a game within itself. Sadly, this innovative feature and the boatload of unlockables aren't enough, as this one still feels too much like a pro game in college clothing.



PATRICK: Sega...excuse me, ESPN Videogames' college game is definitely a tournament qualifier, but not the national champ. The new features rule—you can create your own school, slam through a dunk contest, and explore the revamped Legacy mode. Plus, the slick ESPN presentation replicates what you see on the tube from November through March (sans Dickie V). Sadly, although the title looks amazing, the gameplay feels a little stiff. In attempting to create the most realistic college experience, Sega took some of the fun out of the game.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—GIANCARLO: This game has all the characteristics of college basketball, but closer inspection reveals a lack of follow-through. For example, while teams play in the typical college zone defenses, a lot of the time they can be beaten by using pro ball tactics. The A.I. can be a little inconsistent, as well—passes in the open court are often deflected, while passes thrown by defenders in the paint go untouched. Still, it's not a bad game, but it needs to differentiate itself from its NBA sibling.



THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	6.5	7.5	6.5
	BRYAN	PATRICK	GIANCARLO

Publisher: ESPN Videogames
 Developer: ESPN Videogames
 Players: PS2: 1-2 (2-8 w/ MultiTap, 2-10 online);
 Xbox: 1-4 (2-8 online)
 ESRB: Everyone

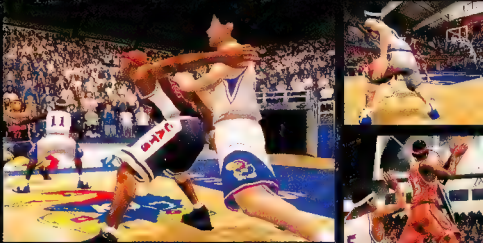
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■ PS2, XB

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(PS2 ONLY)

NCAA MARCH MADNESS 2004

Prepare to cut down the nets



■ A hand in that area of the body is really a personal foul.

Good: Plays exactly how a college b-ball game should
Bad: Graphics fail to impress
Loudest Arena: Syracuse's Carrier Dome



BRYAN: You're dead wrong if you think the only difference between college and pro basketball is that one group is paid to play. Need proof? Try *March Madness 2004*, and you'll really know what it's like competing at the collegiate level. It all starts on the court, where everything is built around team-based play, instead of 1-on-1 matchups. You'll face swarming full-court presses and tough zone defenses galore—you'll have to pull off some swivel ball movement and sink long-range jumpers to stay alive.

In terms of atmosphere, no other college basketball game captures the sights and sounds of a university arena quite like this. If the raucous crowds aren't stomping their feet, they're belting out school cheers and fight songs. Plus, the courts are littered with cheerleaders and rabble-rousing mascots. Ho-hum visuals and routine recruiting options slightly damage the overall package, but EA's game remains my choice for fans of the sport.

PATRICK: *Madness* impresses with new, authentic offensive moves like the Pro Hop Power Dribble and the ability to choose between taking a jump shot or driving to the hoop. Plus, a more complex defensive A.I. makes the simple pump fake less of a weapon. You still may get the defender in the air, but he's likely to pick your pocket as you attempt to drive by or swat your shot from behind. The ability to intercept inbound passes also beefs up the defense. From *Midnight Madness* to the Final Four, EA's effort emerges as the national champ. But hey,

shouldn't announcer Dick Vitale be in ESPN's college hoops game?

OFFICIAL PS MAG—GIANCARLO: *March Madness 2004* is much more than *NBA Live Jr.* In fact, EA has done a great job of taking this year's *Live* engine and making a wealth of adjustments to reflect the way college basketball is played. You actually have to dissect zone defenses and expose weaknesses to have any chance of taking a good shot. But Bryan's right—it's the atmosphere that adds a little extra zing to the whole package. The fans' chants and noises are incredible. It's definitely worth picking up if you're a college b-ball fan.



■ Swarming defenses aplenty in this year's edition of *NCAA March Madness 2004*.

THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	8.0	8.0	8.0
	BRYAN	PATRICK	GIANCARLO

Publisher: EA Sports
 Developer: EA Canada
 Players: PS2: 1-4 (2-8 w/ MultiTap, 2-4 online);
 Xbox: 1-4
 ESRB: Everyone

www.easports.com

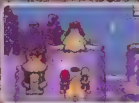
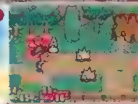
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PS2, XB, GC

NINE
(PS2 ONLY)

NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND

Faster and more furious than expected

DEMIAN: Like some sort of car-based videogame version of Madonna, the *Need for Speed* series likes to reinvent itself every few years. This time, it's left behind the *Smokey and the Bandit*-style police chases of *Hot Pursuit* in favor of late-night street racing, which, as legions of suburbanites driving lowered Civics can attest, is so hot right now.

The biggest change to *Underground*, though, is visual. A lot of work has gone into conveying a sense of speed through camera shake and blur effects, and the result is pretty amazing. It's something you can't appreciate until you see the game in motion, but when you do you'll wonder why other games haven't done it before—and you won't be surprised when, a year from now, everyone has "borrowed" the technique.

Other aspects of *Underground* are less innovative. You'll follow a linear progression of races, unlocking upgrades along the way, but it's odd—even though you'll be flush with cash, you can't buy even minor add-ons like tinted windows until

the game lets you. The tracks are also quite repetitive; the game takes place in a single city, and the same bits show up in one race after another.

Still, the actual racing can be intensely fun. The drift races are especially good—these style-point challenges take place on special tracks and are the best way to get a feel for the handling differences between cars. If you're in the market for a fast, arcade racer, check out this little number.

SHAWN: If, like me, you're interested in import tuning, but lack the cash to build (and insure) a competitive car, you can't do much better than this. From tail lights to tinted windows, body kits to bumpers, everything's tweakable, and you'll spend hours dressing up your four-wheeled doll.

Performance, of course, is more important than appearance, and *Underground* boasts better handling than any other arcade racer. It's also faster. As you barrel down back alleys burning nitrous, the camera wobbles and lights smear to expertly simu-

late reckless speed. *Demian's* dead-on about the upgrade system, though. The biggest risks in street racing are taken with your wallet, yet you'll never face a difficult decision when writing a check for your next secret weapon in these races.

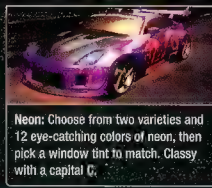
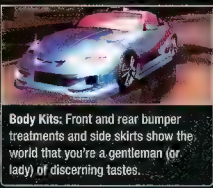
XBN—CHE: Forget about *Midnight Club II*. Take it from someone who's studied that silly Vin Diesel movie frame by frame: *Underground* is, without a doubt, the best approximation there is to Hollywood's rendition of illegal street racing. This game captures perfectly the illicit thrills and cocky one-upmanship of fringe racing. By combining real-life autos and aftermarket parts with totally unrealistic—but ultimately fun—car physics, *Underground* is a unique adrenaline rush through a psychedelic neon wonderland. The game's success rides largely on the way it constantly rewards you with goodies for your car, from performance mods to cosmetic makeovers. *Underground* is an awesome way to revise this aging franchise.



What's the DIRT?
The PlayStation 2 version of *Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2* was way, way better than the Xbox or GameCube versions, but we're happy to report that in *Underground* there isn't much difference between the three, aside from minor graphical variations. If you have your pick, go with the PS2 version—it features exclusive online play (1-4 players broadband).

Mod Squad

Underground goes way beyond the usual performance tweaks found in most racing games. Cosmetic upgrades are crucial for increasing your reputation and upping your style points.



Good: Stunning visual effects.
Bad: Recycled tracks can get repetitive.
Crying Shame: No whistle-ble muffler.



THE VERDICT
OUT OF 10

8.5 8.5 9.0

DEMIAN

SHAWN

CHE

Publisher: EA Games
Developer: Black Box
Players: 1-2 (2-4 online PS2 only)
ESRB: Everyone

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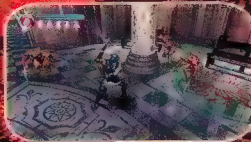
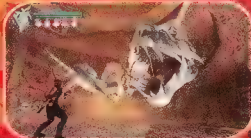
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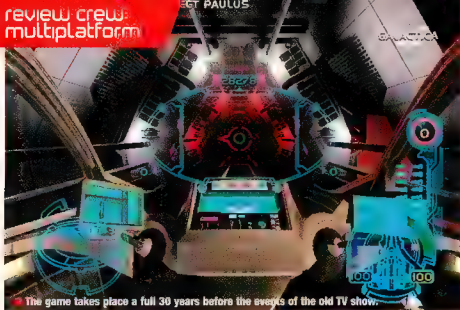
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PS2, XB

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

Finally play as a young Lorne Greene



(Left) You're looking at... A) The cockpit view of a Cylon ship, or B) The back of an '86 IROC.

Good: Better special effects than the old show's
Bad: Frustrating mission objectives
Where Oh Where Is: That damn roboodoo!



CRISPIN: This slick-looking space shooter certainly packs snazzier visuals than the creaky old TV series (although, in a nice retro touch, it does zap out the same toy ray-gun sound effects). And once the game reminded me what the show was actually about (it has been a while), I dug diving back into the *Galactica* universe.

Until the cruel mission design started busting my buzz. One early turret level is plain of 'busted, forcing you to defend the *Galactica* battleship from a torpedo barrage that seemingly can't be shot down. Survive that (by pure luck), and you move on to a mission that demands 10 minutes of ho-hum formation flight in a stolen enemy ship, only to have you repeat the tedious process over and over when you flub the tricky follow-up objectives.

In fact, many mission goals are just not clear and require a lot of trial and error to figure out. A lack of targeting options (despite otherwise excellent control) turns one escape stage into a total nightmare. Outside of a few nifty levels, the game just feels like it was launched before all systems were go.

MARK: *Battlestar* looks sharp, although just seeing all the old ships and hearing the trademark laser sounds ("pee-ear, pee-ear") would've been enough to make this old-timer happy. Controls are responsive and surprisingly deep, with maneuvers that let you match a target's speed, issue orders to wingmen, and execute barrel rolls. Problem is the game is about as friendly as a Cylon; there's no tutorial to ease you into all those moves or the different mission types, and the difficulty spikes at odd moments, making some levels painfully tedious.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—SCOOTER: *Battlestar Galactica* is frustrating both in the game-playing and reviewing sense. I like the general story line, I love the production values, and I totally dig the nostalgia of blasting old-school Cylons. Yet the missions are just so brutally hard (especially ones that involve protecting someone) that all fun gets seriously dampened, making it a chore to make it to the later levels. Ultimately, I think it's a worthy fight, but only if you have a high tolerance.

THE VERDICTS	6.0 6.0 5.5		
	CRISPIN	MARK	SCOOTER

Publisher: VU Games
 Developer: Warthog
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Teen

battlestargalacticagame.com

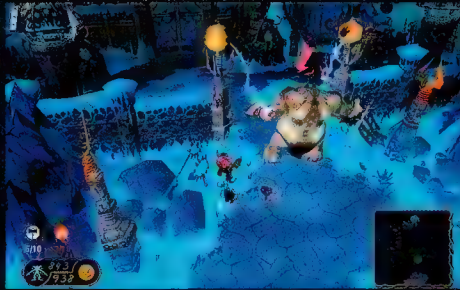


(Right) Zoom in to see the nooks and crannies in your troops' faces.

PS2, XB, GC

GOBLIN COMMANDER: UNLEASH THE HORDE

Controlling goblins for fun and profit



Take manual control of your ogre and crush the competition...as in, actual crushing.

Good: Lots of variety between missions. And very addictive.
Bad: Might be too simplified for some strategy fans.
Best Advanced Unit: Giant spiked hamster ball!



JOE: Fans of real-time strategy games such as *StarCraft* and *Command & Conquer* likely assume they won't get any worthwhile titles outside PC, but that's just not so. Developed by folks who worked on Blizzard's *WarCraft* series, *Goblin Commander* is the best original RTS game ever to grace a console system.

See, the problem that classic strategy titles face is re-creating the mouse and keyboard PC interface on a controller. But *Commander* handles this issue better than any in the past by simplifying the commands so that each army type can be controlled by a single button and allowing you to take direct control over units when necessary. Streamlined resource management also ups the fun: It's easy to snag gold by simply busting up the environments.

If *Goblin Commander* sounds like a dumbed-down RTS, that's probably an apt description, but it's still an extremely playable game with excellent level design. Sure, it lacks the depth of PC strategy games (and it has a few warts—which Scooter had more of a problem with than I did), but on consoles, it rules the roost.

PAUL: These goblins stick to their stereotypes: They're good at destroying and pillaging, not so good at behaving strategically, and downright bad at communicating. *Commander* makes it easy to whip up a band of marauders and send them into the fray (the classic RTS build-attack-repeat pattern)—but forget about pulling your forces back from a losing battle or sussing out the enemy's positions without engaging them. Tactically, it's pretty boring, but if you can get into the goblins' expendable-offense mindset, it's a smashing time.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—SCOOTER: Allow me to play the role of the cranky, has-played-too-many-RTS-games-on-PC reviewer. There isn't much actual unit balance here (after researching the most expensive unit, there's no strategic reason to use earlier ones, besides cost), the AI is neither smart nor resourceful (I've never seen it gather resources or repair structures), and you can't make control groups (the bread and butter of any competent RTS player). I'll give the game credit for letting me directly control the units. Otherwise, it's just "eh."

THE VERDICTS	8.0 6.0		
	JOE	PAUL	SCOOTER

Publisher: Jaleco
 Developer: Jaleco
 Players: 1-2
 ESRB: Teen

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it's good to play together


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PS2, XB, GC  (PS2 ONLY)

MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN

Dishonorable discharge

MARK: It may be called *Rising Sun*, but I'd say the sun's starting to set on the *Medal of Honor* series.

The game does have its moments: Escaping from the bowels of a Pearl Harbor carrier, infiltrating a secret meeting of the enemy command, riding shotgun on a boat or in the back of a truck—most of *Rising Sun*'s gameplay is solid-but-predictable first-person shooting, but each mission has a special event or two that stands out. As for replay, alterations to levels for the two-player co-op mode is reason enough to pick the game back up after the seven or so hours it will take you to finish the first time through.

The problems—and they are big problems—are with the A.I. and graphics. The vast burned-out cities and dense jungle levels are ambitious in design, but in execution they look drab and simplistic. Convincing outdoor environments are always tough to pull off, but the big green walls, angular trees, and blurry textures in *Rising Sun* don't come close. As for enemy behavior, it's so

embarrassingly bad at times, it's hard not to laugh. Japanese soldiers don't react to gunshots whizzing by, can often be found inexplicably staring at walls, and slowly spin in a circle when they miss with bayonet attacks, searching for a new target like a broken robot. It's not enough to completely ruin the game, but this kind of lazy execution makes me wonder how much life this franchise has left in it.

PAUL: Aside from a few moments of forgivable melodrama, *Rising Sun* handles its Pacific theater setting surprisingly well. From Pearl Harbor to the Philippines to a dense Burmese jungle, the player's progress through the game follows the Allies' path to victory, which is quite cool.

Otherwise, *Rising Sun* is a mediocre affair. Flat backdrops, jagged vegetation, and contrived obstacles destroy any sense of historical immersion. Characters don't even face you when they're talking to you—they turn to a predetermined direction and recite their lines whether you're nearby or not.

And the enemy is entirely predictable, so even the firefights quickly become rote. This tour of duty is fit for serious war buffs only.

SHAWN: *Rising Sun*'s depiction of Pearl Harbor and America's part in the war to follow is on par with a Hollywood feature. Unfortunately, it's also as much a victim of bad acting as most summer blockbusters. When a soldier, either friend or foe, isn't saying something stupid, he's often doing something stupid. No matter how stunning the set, it takes only a few missed cues to taint a shot, and here it seems like the A.I. forgot to read the script.

Rising Sun's bang-to-buck ratio is high, but the epic presentation sometimes overshadows the gameplay. Some 35 percent of the action clamps you to rails and turrets in scripted sequences where every enemy seems determined to run or fly directly into your line of fire. Even so, I couldn't put this game down, if only to witness the next astonishing level.



Multiplayer Match

For some reason, the *Honor* series has never taken multiplayer seriously, and *Rising Sun* is no different. Split-screen on all systems or online on the PS2, *Sun* offers only two match types: deathmatch or team deathmatch. These versus games are a nice distraction, but even with a good number of levels, the lack of modes means the online fun doesn't last long.



Give Peace a Chance
Ever notice how anytime you get behind a large gun embankment in the *Medal of Honor* games, about 100 enemies suddenly appear and charge right at you, just asking to be shot down? Next time, resist the temptation and just walk on by that tempting machine gun or big cannon—no bad guys, nothing.



■ *Rising Sun* could have used more exciting scripted events like this POW rescue scene.

Good: Some exciting cinematic moments; great soundtrack
Bad: Laughable enemy A.I.; muddy graphics
More fun: Enemies and friends look alike; promotes the war



THE VERDICT (out of 10)

5.5	5.0	5.5
MARK	PAUL	SHAWN

Publisher: EA Games
 Developer: EA Games
 Players: 1-4 (2-8 online PS2 only)
 ESRB: Teen

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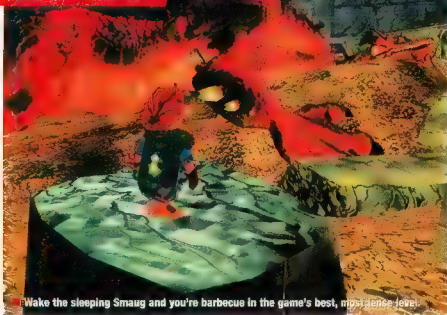


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PS2, XB, GC

THE HOBBIT

Where there's a wimp, there's a way

Good: Clever puzzles.

Bad: Blah fetch-the-item quests.

Mood Music: Leonard Nimoy's "Balloo" w/ Bilbo Baggins!

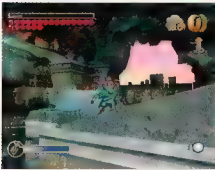


CRISPIN: If you're a grown-up gamer whose mental image of Middle-earth is of blood-smeared swords, raving orcs, and other nightmare snapshots from Peter Jackson's trilogy, you'll likely dismiss *The Hobbit* as a squeaky-clean Tolkien adaptation for tots. And that's a shame, because under the overly colorful graphics and so-cute-they're-ugly character designs lies a fun, little adventure.

The gameplay and sprawling environments are scraped from the *Legend of Zelda* mold, with crafty puzzles and an emphasis on stealth—thanks to the invisibility-granting ring—and platform hopping. Fuzzy-toed hero Bilbo does get bogged down in tedious fetch-the-doodad missions later in his quest. In fact, the game flat-out misses some opportunities from the book. It glosses over Bilbo's snatching of the troublesome ring from Gollum (the whole exchange happens in a cinema), but then we get entire levels based on finding firewood and solving crime for townfolk. Maybe the tykes crave that kind of busy work, but mature gamers demand more—like a hero who doesn't look fresh out of training pants.

JOE: Tolkien purists will no doubt be thrilled to hear that this game lovingly re-creates the beloved prequel's lengthy platform-jumping passages. *The Hobbit* plays like a mix of *Zelda* and *Tomb Raider*—and fittingly has a lead character that looks like a blend of the two lines' heroes: an awful, pointy-eared little girl. Sure, like Crispin says, *The Hobbit* isn't a terrible game, but its sketchy camera, imprecise controls, and lackluster combat relegate it to the realm of the terribly average to me. I've been there and back again, and next time, I'm staying home.

OFFICIAL EW MAG—CHRIS B: So what if Bilbo looks like an *Ape Escape* reject? Any Tolkien fan should still get a kick out of this adaptation of *The Hobbit*. As an action-platformer, the game brings almost every book chapter to life through some long (sometimes too long) levels full of simple yet interesting puzzle-solving and fun combat. A fancy camera and some sloppy rope-jumping cause many cheap deaths, but you never feel overly frustrated—just kind of annoyed. The Smaug level alone makes it all worthwhile.



THE VERDICT OUT OF 10	6.5	5.0	7.0
	CRISPIN	JOE	CHRIS B.
	thehobbit.sierra.com		

Publisher: VU Games
Developer: Inevitable
Players: 1
ESRB: Everyone

PS2, XB, GC

R: RACING EVOLUTION

Namco misses the podium



Good-bye, snazzy Ridge Racer ches. Hello, county fair.

Good: The cars look great

Bad: Slow, plodding game progression

Feels Like You're: Driving on ice



GREG S: The *Ridge Racer* series has always been about arcade-style driving. Sail off into the corners at full speed, swing the rear end around, jam the gas, and head down the straight. With *Racing Evolution*, Namco opts to inject a bit of realism into the game, transforming it into a dull jack-of-all-trades hybrid.

The developers try to spice things up a bit with a Story mode that forces you to play through various types of racing in order to unlock new vehicles. But the action on the track is mediocre, especially once you realize you'll have to wrestle with the touchy control on the same tracks in the same cars over and over.

One facet of the *Ridge Racer* legacy goes mercifully untouched—presentation. *R* impresses with shiny rides, lifelike courses, and gorgeous cinemas. But these skin-deep looks can't mask the fact that *R* doesn't stand out in any category. You want a better pure racing sim? Play *Gran Turismo 3* or *Sega GT*. Arcade racer? *Project Gotham 2* and *Burnout 2* destroy this. Unless you're a bona fide *Ridge Racer* fanatic, there's no reason to play *R*.

SHOE: *R* straddles the median, never committing to being a full-on simulation game, but never being as arcadey as its *Ridge Racer* ancestors, either. Unfortunately, the results ain't one of those "best of both worlds" things: *Ridge* racers will hate spinning out every time they approach a turn too fast, yet serious drivers can find much deeper games elsewhere. The Story mode is interesting, because it teaches you how to drive properly (and features

hot rendered chicks). At the same time, it forces you to play certain circuits and race types in order...

XBN—CHE: *R*'s take on obsessive racing realism is a miserable failure. It gets the basics down—beautiful real-life cars and courses—but forgets the most vital ingredient: gameplay. As a driving sim, *R* feels watered down, with twitchy, frustrating controls and zero customization options. As an arcade racer, the game lacks any sense of danger, requiring you to brake into corners and speed out of them with as little drifting as possible. *R* is neither here nor there...nowhere you'd want to be.



Ever wondered why replays always look better than the real game? We have, too.

THE VERDICT OUT OF 10	6.5	6.0	
	GREG S.	SHOE	CHE
	www.namco.com		

Publisher: Namco
Developer: Namco
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Teen

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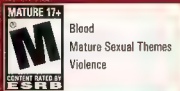
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PlayStation 2





PlayStation 2



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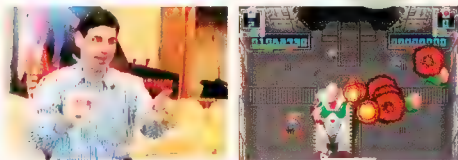
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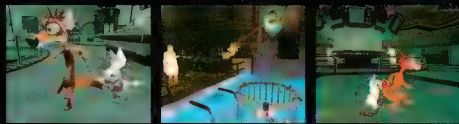
PS2, XB, GC

MIDWAY ARCADE TREASURES

Like, you know, the good ol' days



■ (Left) Bonus: Developers explain how they've used their geeky powers for the good of mankind.

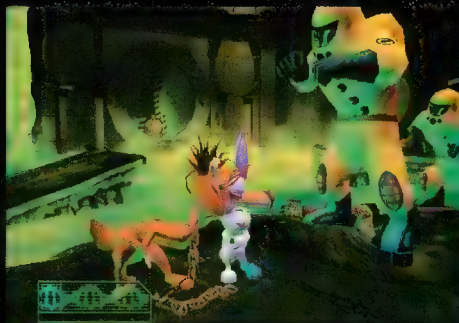


■ Explore the lighter side of small-animal abuse by hitting things with a rabbit on a chain.

PS2, XB

WHIPLASH

When something's going wrong, you must whip it



■ Laboratory antics abound—the entire game takes place inside Genrom Corp.

Good: Most of the classics on this 20-game roster.

Bad: Little kids who can't understand why *Robotnik* rules.

Go Ahead, Show Off: On High Score Live (through Xbox Live)



SHOE: You're probably expecting a lot of old-man talk about how good gaming used to be in its 2D heydays, how these classics are better than most of the 3D junk you see today, and how kids should appreciate the pure gameplay these time-tested titles have to offer. Well, I ain't here to disappoint, so here goes.

This incredible compilation is a dream team of sorts for anyone old enough to remember having to go out to play the best videogames. *Gauntlet*, *Smash TV*, *Joust*, *Defender*, *Root Beer Tapper*, *Marble Madness*, *Rampart*... I mean, c'mon—I don't care how much saying this dates me, but these arcade games are sweet! I mean, rad! These games—more old-man talk incoming—aren't about flashy graphics or deep gameplay. They're about hand-eye coordination, lightning-fast reflexes, stamina, and getting into that zone where everything comes together just right, and you walk away with a high score that brings a bigger smile to your face than you'll ever get watching a cinematic ending to a 40-hour role-playing game. If you can relate, brother, then you must buy this disc.

CJ: *Treasures* is an affordable trip down memory lane. But it's a well-trodden path...and this collection isn't taking the scenic route. The biggest disappointment is that the extra interviews, trivia, and galleries are all repeats from old Midway compilations, complete with grainy PS1-quality video. Then some of the games limit you to just a handful of credits. Why? If I was playing these games in an arcade, I could put as many tokens in as I wanted. I'll still recommend it for the selection of arcade-perfect games, but I was hoping for more.

GAMENOW—PHIL: Why must CJ focus on the negatives? Sure, the bonus materials are pretty lame (see *Activision Anthology* on PS2 for proper extras), but who cares when you have a collection of a couple dozen great old arcade games? Unlike most classic compilations, the bulk of games here are still legitimately fun to play. You get a couple friends on *Smash TV* or *Gauntlet* with you, and you'll be hooked for hours. And considering you get all these timeless games for a mere 20 bucks, there's no reason not to buy it.

THE VERDICTS
GAMES

8.5 7.5 8.5

SHOE

CJ

PHIL

Publisher: Midway
Developer: Midway
Players: 1-4
ESRB: Teen

www.midway.com

Good: Top-notch physical humor

Bad: Confusing level layouts

Also Known As: *Jak and Daxter's Bondage Adventure*



JON D: *Whiplash* is an action-platforming romp that gleefully uses a meek little rabbit on a chain to destroy a major corporation. Twisted? Perhaps, but the game's unique layout befits its nontraditional story. The entire adventure unfolds like one continuous escape scene, with minibosses and checkpoints along the way. Luckily, it never feels too monotonous, because something as simple as getting to and using an elevator might spawn a two-hour quest. But since the only consistent form of interaction in *Whiplash* puts every person and object at the trailing end of a bunny chain-whip, the mass destruction does get old. But the spirit of the sadistic, bitter minds that spawned this idea thrives throughout the game—finding new ways to test the limits of the durable Redmond rabbit was what kept me going.

Unfortunately, I spent most of my time trying to distinguish doorways and corridors from one another. Most look so similar that it's hard to tell if you're backtracking or progressing without constantly checking a map. Still, any platform fan with a quirky sense of humor owes this one a rental.

CJ: At the very least, *Whiplash* deserves praise for trying something different. But while I love *Whiplash*'s over-the-top concept and humor, its gameplay and graphics languish in a sea of averageness. You wander from room to all-too-similar room, struggling with a map system that's too convoluted to be useful and unclear goals that lead to too much trial and error. When there are so many great platforms to play, *Whiplash*'s faults overshadow its triumphs, making it easy to throw in the "I'll never have time" pile.

KEVIN: I'll admit it. I am smitten. Spax and Redmond are the cutest little bobbins I've seen in a U.S.-developed platformer since... well, since ever. Their game's a ton of fun, too, with solid controls, diverse level designs, and perfect difficulty. The sense of hugeness in some sections is very impressive, and the secondary quest (busting up the complex until its net worth is \$0) is almost more engaging than the primary one. The only major flaw is the game's occasionally uneven graphics—the enemies look like they're from a PS1 game.

THE VERDICTS
GAMES

7.0 6.0 8.0

JON D.

CJ

KEVIN

Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Crystal Dynamics
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

www.whiplashgame.com

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■ If your girlfriend calls you "my dark prince," *Defiance* was made for you.

PS2, XB

LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE

I have no jaw, and I must scream

JOE: Check and mate. *Legacy of Kain: Defiance* successfully blends the disparate *Soul Reaver* and *Blood Omen* franchises into one grisly, beautiful package. The game's environments are full of jaw-dropping, ornately detailed gothic cathedrals, craggy, cavernous catacombs, and spooky netherworlds. Plus, its music, sound effects, and voice work are equally top-notch—creating an experience that's half horror movie and half overwrought, goth-tacular play. Likewise, the series' much improved combat system is a true black-hearted pleasure, allowing you to juggle opponents in the air and then use telekinesis to toss them into hazards such as fireplaces and spikes. Douch.

But *Defiance* has a dark side...an unintentional one. The series' near-perfect follow-camera has been sacrificed in order to give you a better view of the fights, and it's tougher to perform platform jumps now because of that. Also, the previous games' once-brainy puzzles have become so much easier that they're usually only really challenging

when they require you to traverse the game's numerous, samey environments without the aid of a map function. And the combat, while vastly better than in previous *Kains*, lacks variety because there aren't enough different kinds of foes.

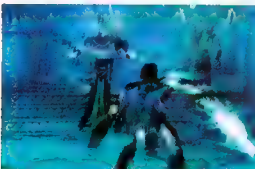
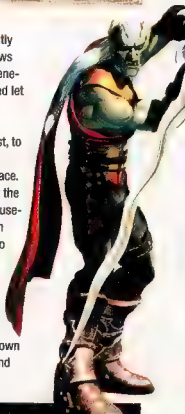
That all said, *Defiance* still has a compelling enough story—and strong enough gameplay—to make you see it through to the bloody end.

BRYAN: Whether you favor the taste of blood or souls, *Defiance* successfully quenches your undying thirst for either. And thanks to a completely overhauled combat system, you'll feel like a badass while fulfilling these dark desires. But besides the heavily upgraded hack-n-slash action, what really sells me on this dual-vampire venture is the narrative. The story's captivating twists and turns kept me awake well into the wee hours of the night, anxiously ascertaining the fates of both Kain and Raziel. Oh yeah, it also doesn't hurt that the game looks stunningly gor-

geous, and unlike Joe, I find the puzzles perfectly challenging. Sure, *Defiance* has its share of flaws (finicky camera, not enough different types of enemies), but all are quite minor. Stop resisting, and let the sucking and reaving commence.

JOHN D: The *Kain* games exist, first and foremost, to tell a story. And like its predecessors, *Defiance* flows plot points together with considerable grace. But for the first time, I'm actually excited about the combat between the cinemas: Kain possesses useful telekinetic powers right off the bat, and both heroes use combo-promoting enemy juggling to gleefully bleed bad guys.

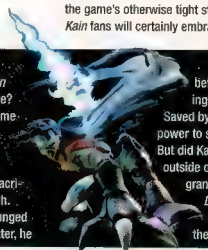
Still, despite these fixes to the series' traditionally bland gameplay, *Defiance* feels rushed. All too often, glitchy A.I. issues and an inexcusably bad camera show that a little more polish was needed. These loose screws don't break down the game's otherwise tight structure, though, and *Kain* fans will certainly embrace *Defiance*.



■ Travel to the (incredibly trippy) spectral realm as Raziel and devour the souls of the fallen.

A Tale of Two Vampires

What's the premise of the *Legacy of Kain* series? Um...how much time do you have? After five games rife with lies, artifice, time travel, and manipulation, that's not a quick or easy story to tell. But here's a quick rundown of this dark soap opera: Vampire Kain rejected a choice of self-sacrifice that would purify the land of Nosgoth. Instead, he became its ruler, and this plunged the world into ruin. Hundreds of years later, he



betrayed his lieutenant Raziel by tossing him into a vortex that ravaged his body. Saved by a magical...octopus, Raziel gained the power to suck souls and vowed vengeance on Kain. But did Kain actually do him a favor by setting him outside of the "wheel of death and life" and thus granting him free will? In *Legacy of Kain: Defiance*, you play as both Kain and Raziel as they attempt to find out—and survive their enemies' twisted machinations.



THE CRITICS
SAY

7.5

JOE

8.0

BRYAN

7.0

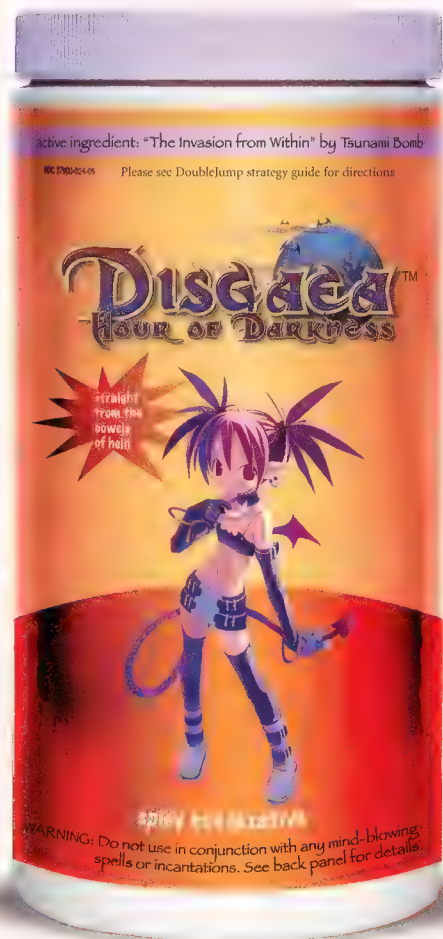
JOHN D.

Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Crystal Dynamics
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

www.eidos.com

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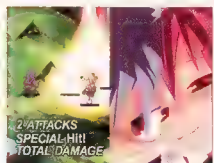
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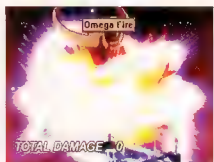
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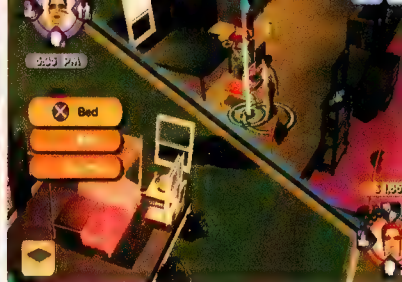
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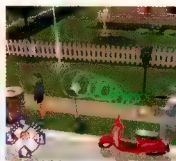


PlayStation 2





■ The spitscreen two-player co-op is so quirky and fun, you'll quickly forget that you're basically playing house.



PS2, XB, GC

ONLINE
(PS2 ONLY)

THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT

Welcome to the dollhouse

JENNIFER: Some of you will never understand *The Sims*. To the casual observer—and even perhaps to some who've tried the game—it all seems so terribly...um, let's see...boring and stupid? I'll admit that *The Sims* can get tedious, what with all the clicking and pointing to direct little creatures living in a virtual dollhouse to eat, pee, chat, go to work, and sleep. And if you're someone who can't get beyond that, you won't like this version any more than last year's. Everyone else will be thrilled.

Your Sim now has total mobility in Story mode—you can switch locations and careers at any time—and it's an excellent change. If you're having trouble getting promoted, you can move back to Mom's for a while and work on your skills. Need more friends? Hop on your scooter and go visit your neighbors to beef up your social roster. Adding this amount of freedom and variety really livens things up. Also, since you can play all the careers with one Sim, there's tremendous replay value. When I first started playing, I thought com-

pling one career would satisfy me. But the multitude of fun unlockables (like an incubator that creates mutant housefly-eating plants) and cool locations (including a nudist colony) motivated me to keep playing, and playing, and playing.... It's monotonous, mundane, and frightfully addictive—just the way I like 'em.

DEMIAN: The world's premiere personal hygiene and housekeeping simulator returns, with yet more domestic mishaps and delicious romantic misunderstandings. Though it looks like the same old thing, the series' offbeat humor really comes through in the new career tracks (like Gangster and Fashion Victim), items, and social interactions. But it's the option to actually leave your house—whether to visit friends or just kick it at Club Rubb—that tops the list of additions. Oh, and being able to play co-op with another person is great, too—that "pull my finger" joke just gets funnier and funnier. If you weren't crazy about the

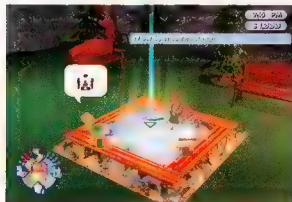
last *Sims*, this won't change your mind, but for fans, it's worth checking out.

GAMENOW—CARRIE: I can't explain why managing a Sim's life is so much more engrossing than dealing with my own. I've become so involved with my character's world that I've been dreaming about it, complete with the thought bubbles over everyone's heads.

The new twist of being able to visit other locations is definitely reason enough to play this new version—I love bopping around town to visit my Sim friends and use their swank amenities that I can't afford. And being able to "booty tease" and gossip has definitely spiced up my interactions, thereby removing much of the tedium of trying to befriend my neighbors. Oh, and for the GC kids, connecting with the GBA version of the game—which gets you sorta-lame minigames—is a slight bonus, but my Sims got all hungry, tired, and full of pee while I was playing them.

The Long Road Home

Watching your Sim drive from location to location is fun, but does it have to take so damn long? The town can't be that big. Next time, we hope driving from house to house won't make us wish we'd flown.



Relax...It's the Online Weekend!

The Sims Bustin' Out online (PS2 only) offers something your Sim has never experienced: a weekend. In the normal game, you work every single day, and you're penalized for skipping. But the online two-player mode, called "Online Weekend," allows you to interact with others and play cooperatively without having to go to work. This means you just get to hang around the house, maxing out your skills, chatting, and trading unlockable objects. New stuff obtained online is imported back into your offline game, where you can then focus on making friends, having parties, and getting promoted—kinda like we wish real life could be.



Good: New unlockables spice up the Story and Free Play modes.
Bad: Your Sim missing the bus to work... by ONE minute.
We're So Glad: Sims with cars or Sims driving minigames.



THE VERDICT
GAMES

9.0 8.5 9.0

JENNIFER

DEMIAN

CARRIE

Publisher: EA
Developer: Maxis
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Teen

www.thesims.com



■ Dudes from *Art of Fighting* versus *Fatal Fury* guys...eight years ago, this caused riots.

PlayStation 2

KING OF FIGHTERS 2000 & 2001

Let's go antiquing for fighters



■ (Left) Why do histicuffs always seem to break out at the aquarium's manatee tank?

Good: *King of Fighters 2000*

Bad: *King of Fighters 2001*

Anime Alert: K9999's voice actor also played Tetsuo in *Akira*



SHANE: The 13-year-old Neo-Geo technology refuses to fade quietly into gaming's history—people are still making games for it, and now, ports of recent ones are even landing on PS2. Is there still room for technology lauded as “bigger, badder, and better” than the Sega Genesis? Not so much.

Both *KOF* games included here are total throwbacks to the fighting games of yesteryear: legions of selectable characters, simple 2D backgrounds, copious special moves...and well, nothing you haven't seen a million times before. Functionally, these games offer perfectly decent gameplay, but they just look and feel so very, very old (despite a few PS2-only visual upgrades). Oddly, *KOF 2001* is especially offensive—its visuals and sounds pale in comparison to those in *2000*. But hell, try playing either of 'em directly after a few rounds of *GUILTY GEAR X2* and you'll wince in pain.

Realistically, this collection will appeal to you only if you're already into *KOF*. And even then, you'll be grateful to get both games for one low price...as you'd never want to pay full price for *KOF 2001*.

SHAWN: Like a kung fu flick in today's age of computer-enhanced choreography, *KOF* remains an unrepentant relic. Ravaged by age and running on obsolete technology, it's uglier than ever. Still, you can't call *KOF* incompetent—atrociously lazy and reluctant to change, but not incompetent. As Shane says, *2000*, which streamlines character-specific moves, is by far the better game of the pair. With throw escapes and counterattacks, it's deep and responsive, but only faithfuls will pick it over Capcom's 2D fighters.

GAMENOW—SUSHI-X: If you approach this game unprepared, then you'll likely catch a brutal double-dose of 2D fighting to the face—and it won't be pretty. Straight up, the two games included here aren't visually impressive. But if you can get over this, you're in for some goodness—the *KOF* games offer excellent gameplay, standing alongside the *Street Fighter* series in the 2D fighting pantheon. Don't be scared—these installments are as valid and compelling as games like *Capcom vs. SNK 2*.

THE VERDICT	5.5	5.0	7.5
	SHANE	SHAWN	SUSHI-X

Publisher: SNK Neo-Geo
Developer: Playmore
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Teen

www.snkneogousa.com



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ack one enemy.



Yuna sings her heart out at Yunapalooza. No, seriously. We swear.

PlayStation 2

FINAL FANTASY X-2

Girls gone wild



Prerequisite: *FFX-2* comes with a major caveat—unless you've finished *FFX*, much of the narrative will be lost on you. The game picks up two years after the first game's bitter-sweet ending, and very little time is spent recapping the past. You'll want to understand Yuna's eventual history in order to appreciate just how much she's changed.

SHANE: I wasn't quite sure what to expect from *X-2*. I really enjoyed *Final Fantasy X*, so, naturally I was eager to reenter the beautiful realm of Spira...but would this return visit live up to the benchmarks established by its forerunner? Well, in a word—no. But it's still awfully damn good.

Plotwise, *X-2* is a radical, intriguing departure from *FFX*. The overall story line is divided equally between giggly girl talk, Yuna's deep soul searching, and a new subplot about warring political factions trying to control Spira. The cutesy bits can get annoying (like when the gals stage Yunapalooza—a rock concert to heal civil unrest), but a serious, compelling undercurrent keeps it from straying too far into goofy nonsense. In fact (without giving away too much), I found the nature of the game's main antagonist to be incredibly interesting...it's very different from the last boss you'll usually face in a role-playing game.

Likewise, the developers had no qualms about totally rewriting the book of gameplay. *X-2* offers only three playable characters—Yuna, Rikku, and newcomer Paine—but it gives them a wide swath of abilities with the ingenious new dressphere system. It allows your gals to master a variety of spells and maneuvers by merely switching costumes and doing battle. You'll actually want to get in random encounters just to rack up mad combos and learn more moves.

The most substantial shift in the game's design is tough to explain—it's an overall sense of freedom that offers unprecedented numbers of purely optional experiences. Unlike in past *FF* games, you now progress by tackling bite-sized missions. And about half of the game's missions, cut-scenes, and dungeons are purely elective—serious players will love ferreting out every last bonus quest. Plus, *X-2* features three different

endings—a totally cool feature that's never before been offered by an *FF* game.

Oddly, *X-2* trips up in the one area where *FF* titles usually shine: presentation. Graphically, it's a gorgeous game...but prepare for a wicked déjà vu. Approximately 90 percent of the environments and enemies are lifted directly from *FFX*. Yes, this is the same world and all...but an effort to present these places in a new way would have really helped. Conversely, I wish they had reused more of *FFX*'s haunting musical themes here—most of the overly bubbly new music sounds like '70s porno soundtrack leftovers.

Luckily, the multifaceted story, deep character customization, and excellent battle system balance out the redundant visuals and cheesy tunes. Bottom line: if you dug *FFX*, you'll also wanna play this. And if you like RPGs but somehow missed out the first time, pick 'em both up.

Dress for Success

Success in battle requires strategic use of both the dresspheres and garment grids. It's pretty easy—simply bring up the gal's equipped grid, choose the new outfit you'd like to wear, and voilà, she's getting all fancy in her new digs. If you tire of these cinemas, you can choose to truncate them or turn them off altogether.



There's no stopping the breakneck battle pace, so you'll have to get used to reacting very, very quickly.

Good: Cool new battle and job systems

Bad: Tons of graphics reused from *FFX*

Hottest Outfit: Lady Luck, the scantily clad gambler's favorite



THE VERDICTS
02/10/02

8.5 9.5 9.5

SHANE

KEVIN

GARY

Publisher: Square Enix
Developer: Square Enix
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

www.square-enix-usa.com

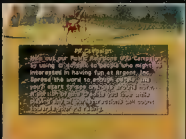
Minigame Mayhem

Ever since *Final Fantasy VII* (PS1) introduced the concept of inserting goofy minigames into traditional roleplaying, the series has never looked back. *X-2* has more than its share of absurd diversions (including the dreaded return of Blitzball, albeit in stripped-down form). Here are a few examples...



Gun Gauntlet

In this game, Yuna blasts caps in the asses of enemies on Besaid Island. Conserve ammo, be quick, and avoid getting hit in order to win big prizes.



Public Relations

Assuredly one of the strangest minigames ever to appear in a *Final Fantasy*, this PR campaign asks the player to pester folks into visiting a fun park of sorts.



Sphere Break

Mathletic players will really dig this wacky blend of addition and multiplication. Everyone else will cry, since you have to master it to get a dressphere.



Treasure Hunting

Join an excavation expedition in the desert to uncover all manner of buried junk. Time-consuming, but the rewards can be substantial.



KEVIN: I know a lot of people have the wrong idea about *Final Fantasy X-2*. I know the game's got naughty outfits, bincy-bouncy pop music, and utterly silly plot twists (FF freaks will probably complain about the girl-on-girl back-rub minigame...well, some of 'em, anyway). I know it takes the sober tone of the world's top console RPG series and turns it into *Spira 90210*. It doesn't matter—*X-2* is still the best thing going for RPG fans right now.

Almost every deviation *X-2* takes from the established

Final Fantasy norm

has paid off. The battle system has undergone a complete overhaul—the battles are in real time, and you can earn damage bonuses if you time your team's attacks correctly. Instead of summons, you have dresspheres that transform your characters into fighters, mages, samurai, and pop singers, each with its own set of latent abilities. The result: The battles in *X-2* are scarily engaging. Jiggering your attacks, rearranging your dresspheres, getting chain combos to work just right...it all works so naturally, and it's the first RPG battle system in a very, very long time that didn't put me to sleep.

Combine this with a nonlinear story system that rewards multiple playthroughs (you'll likely see only half the game on your first play), and you have a *Final Fantasy* that's both hip with the kids and rewarding to RPG maniacs. Check your inhibitions at the door...and let's party!

OFFICIAL PS MAG—GARY: I'm sure a lot of *Final Fantasy* fans will struggle with this game for the same reason I did: I just couldn't believe I was enjoying it so much. I mean, I knew I'd like it. It's *Final Fantasy*, after all, with some of my favorite characters returning to a world I loved. But the new tone and the fact that it's the first-ever true sequel makes it something altogether different.

So here's the deal: Don't fight it. Get into the groove, and you'll be treated to a raucous ride that's certain to be some of the most fun you've ever had with a *Final Fantasy*. I love the story, I adore the addictive battle system, and I can't wait to play through the game again to unlock an even better ending. Even Shane's nuptial about repetitive environments didn't bother me—and all because of those warm, fuzzy feelings I got revisiting those familiar yet drastically changed (machina in a Yevon temple???) environs.

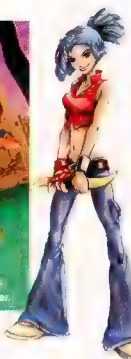
Old Friends Return

Although *FFX*'s lovable costars Kimahri, Wakko, and Lulu don't join Yuna's party this time around, you can still hang out with your buds by visiting 'tents' at their respective hometowns. In fact, be sure to check back in with them all from time to time...doing so leads to unlocking some choice secret items much later in the game.





Kicking pose (left) here, the makes her stand on animal rights all too clear.



PlayStation 2

DRAGON BALL Z: BUDOKAI 2

Goku takes up board games



Not just a pig, but a piggy bank. Name: Bam. Title: Goban. Status: Free.

PlayStation 2

KYA: DARK LINEAGE

Just dust in the wind

Good: Nice blend of gameplay elements.
Bad: Unintuitive town layout.
How She's Free: Free-falling.



G. FORD: The girl may be cute and have some spunk, but she also has her share of blemishes. Kya, the titular character in this action, adventure platformer, is trying to save her brother from a surly band of wolflike beasts. Along with kicking, punching, and throwing a stylish-yet-functional boomerang hair clip, our heroine can hoverboard and free-fall in totally extreme do-the-Dew style. And while these X Games-inspired segments are amusing and control well enough, they often go on far too long and can be frustratingly difficult—expect to replay them a few times. Also, the camera can be absolutely maddening at times.

But these annoyances don't ruin an otherwise solid game—all the platforming and puzzle segments prove enjoyable and clever. In one level, while scaling a mountain, you use the wind to plant yourself against a wall as you inch your way over a gap. Another has you navigating your Yoshi-esque steed alongside a train before jumping aboard. It's some truly exhilarating stuff. For those willing to give the girl a shot, Kya delivers a good enough time.

JENNIFER: Kya, I wanted to love you—you with your cute blue dreadlocks, fun bracelet power-ups, and boomerangs aplenty; your pretty worlds and their fanciful flora and fauna; your whimsical story line and its hapless villagers to free. I came to you with an open heart; unfortunately, our honeymoon was cut short that first time the camera fell through the floor and wouldn't show me where you were jumping. And too many hours wandering aimless, searching for the next goal, forced me to leave you. Don't ask for another chance, Kya. It's over.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—GARY: Nobody likes the wind. Seriously, nobody. I mean, it's annoying. It messes up your hair. It bally...blows. Fitting, then, that Kya utilizes the wind as its most "innovative" gameplay element. Free-falling sounds kinda neat, sure, but in practice it's rather dull after the first few times. And when that's the best on offer from this profoundly-mediocre-platformer-with-aspirations-of-greatness, Kya simply doesn't have what it takes to stand out this holiday season.



THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	6.5	6.0	5.0
	G. FORD	JENNIFER	GARY

Publisher: Atari
Developer: Eden Games
Players: 1 (1-6 alternating in minigames)
ESRB: Teen

www.atari.com

Good: The toon-shaded visuals look fantastic.
Bad: Easy to get bored with board-game gameplay.
Worst Idea Ever: Getting rid of the episodic style of *Budokai 1*.



CJ: The first *Budokai* was proof that it's possible to make a decent *DBZ* game. *Budokai 2* wisely keeps the fighting gameplay the same (barring some neat fusions and countering tweaks), but at the same time, it drops the cool anime-style cinema sequences that I enjoyed so much last time around. Reducing the story to talking heads turns the once-engaging plot into a drab, formulaic mess.

But where *Budokai 2* loses its ability to fly is in its new board-game-style single-player game. Seriously, whose idea was it to make this the main mode? It's just not fun to move game pieces around flat, uninteresting maps when all you have to look forward to is fighting the same characters *multiple* times per board until they're dead and maybe collecting a few new technique capsules. It ends up feeling like a cheap way to extend the game. It's not all bad news, though—the new cartoon-shaded graphics look nice, and the option to customize a fighter's attacks with capsules spices up the Versus play. But this time around, *Budokai's* best left to the most loyal breed of *DBZ* fan.

SHAWN: *Budokai 2* captures the cartoon's manic essence but doesn't fare as well when judged solely on its merits as a fighting game. The core combat is essentially the same as last year's, and while there are over 30 characters to choose from, they're all clones as far as combos go, unique only in appearance. While that lets aspiring Saiyans swap characters with ease, it also means us sane folk will never get the chance to develop diverse

skills with different fighters.

SHANE: Last year, I was awestruck by the quality of *Budokai*—it was a veritable *Soul Calibur II* compared to wretched previous attempts like *Dragon Ball GT* and *Ultimate Battle 22* (both on PS1). Sadly, this sequel is a step backwards. Although the basic fighting gameplay (a decent mix of simple combos, copious fireballs, and zany supermoves) remains largely unchanged, the new board-game concept ruins the single-player experience. Fighting the same brain-dead enemies over and over gets really old, really fast. Stick with last year's version.



It may seem cool now, but the fun fades after beating this dude six times straight.

THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	5.5	5.0	5.0
	CJ	SHAWN	SHANE

Publisher: Atari
Developer: Dimps
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Teen

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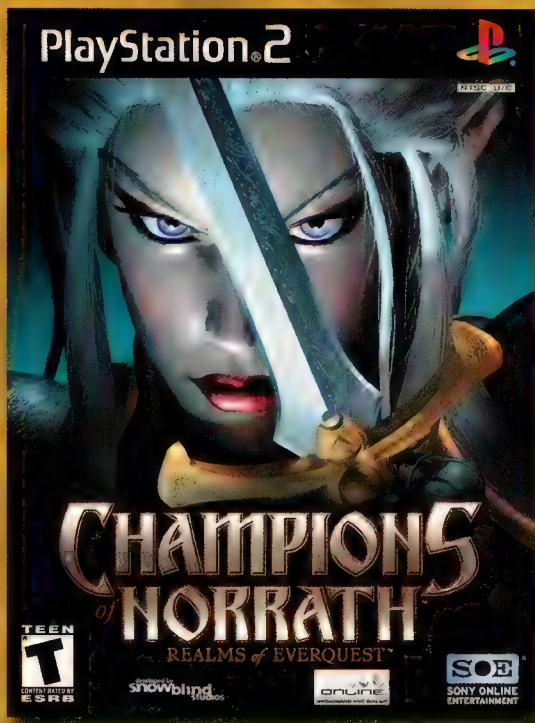


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■ **Yuke!** You know—again—the universal cause.



PlayStation 2

WWE SMACKDOWN! HERE COMES THE PAIN

The king of the squared circle yet again

GREG S: The *SmackDown* series adheres to the age-old philosophy of not fixing what isn't broken. Sure, you'll spot a few key tweaks each year, but in the end, each version offers the same level of quality as the last. And hey, that's not such a bad thing—*Here Comes The Pain* delivers solid thrills that'll please any WWE diehard.

Returning players will definitely appreciate the revamped Story mode. This time around, forging alliances or rivalries really does affect your matches, and the conversations you'll have with other wrestlers sound pretty believable, as opposed to last year's stilted, poorly-written drivel.

As always, the in-ring action is fast and responsive. You're always able to pull off the moves you want, and fluid animation makes 'em look downright painful. As far as your choice of match types and rosters, *Pain* can't be beat. For the first time ever, your dreams of forcibly disrobing opponents in a Bra and Panties Match or bustin' up fools in an Elimination Chamber can be realized. Of course,

neary every superstar you'd ever want is available from the outset—developer Yuke! added a bunch of classic wrestlers this year; now, you can pit guys like Sergeant Slaughter and George "The Animal" Steele against today's stars.

BRYAN: Of all the WWE game franchises, I've favored *SmackDown* the least... until now. Thanks to its incredibly deep Season mode, *Pain* is easily the best wreslin' title since the days of the Nintendo 64. Every week, events transpire in true soap-opera-like fashion, and the decisions you make throughout the ever-changing story lines keep the experience unique. The action inside the ring is great—the new grappling system not only improves match pacing, but, more important, also adds a bevy of moves to your wrestler's arsenal. Visually, however, minor problems exist: Some WWE superstars lack the polish of others, and everyone still walks like they have a stick up their butt. But neither of these complaints will stop

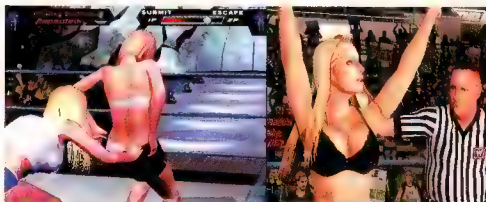
wrestling nuts from enjoying *Pain*.

SHANE: Fundamentally, *Pain*'s a good title—the wrestlers look realistic, the gameplay's responsive and balanced, and there's no shortage of crazy modes. Plus, creating your own wrestlers is easy, breezy fun, with tons of wacky wardrobe options to outfit your friends/enemies with.

Problem is, outside of a few tweaks and minor additions, this is just like last year's *Stut Your Mouth*. For example, the reworked Story mode may have ditched *Mouth*'s boring law-wandering, but *Pain*'s barely animated, stone-silent chats between wrestlers are just as lame. (Should I give Rikishi a ride home after he's injured in a match? The drama!) And the wrestler entrances lack the excitement of the real thing, with crappy-looking spectators and embarrassing, one-sided signboards that mirror the front image on the back, but reversed. How hard is it to render a piece of poster board? Spruce up the presentation next year, please.



Missing in Action
SmackDown missing a few key superstars. Here's a quick list:
■ Molly Holly
■ Gail Kim
■ La Resistance
■ Maven
■ Al Snow
■ Spike Dudley



Panty Raid

Here Comes the Pain features a new mode that fans have been clamoring for: the world-famous Bra and Panties Match. Here, two WWE "Divas" enter the ring and attempt to tear each other's clothes off. The first gal who strips her opponent down to her skivvies wins. Just try to explain this one to any woman passing by the television....



■ Brock shows us his "Oh!" face.

Good? Nice, fast action.

Bad? Still plays like every other wrestling game, even

Best Addition: Bra and Panties Matches.



THE VERDICT
GREG S. 7.5
BRYAN 8.0
SHANE 7.0

7.5 8.0 7.0
GREG S. BRYAN SHANE

Publisher: THQ
Developer: Yuke's
Players: 1-2 (2-6 w/ Multitap)
ESRB: Teen

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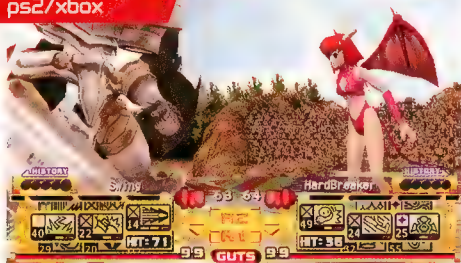
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■ The Honeyuckle Cup pitted a suit of armor against a brazen hussy. It got ugly quick.

PlayStation 2

MONSTER RANCHER 4

Pokémon for stat freaks



■ As always, you can root through your CD and DVD collection to randomly generate monsters.

Good: You raise five monsters at once.

Bad: Too easy, lack of variety.

Makes Us Want: A real *Pokémon* for consoles, already.

KEVIN: After two PS1 hits and one PS2 game that's better forgotten, the fourth *Rancher* takes a very back-to-basics approach. The idea's the same: raise cutsey monsters (five at once this time), enter them in tournaments, and have them tag along with you in adventures across a generic RPG land. Where *MR4* differs is in the approach—instead of navigating menus, you actually control your critter-lovin' scamp this time, running him around the ranch and spending quality time with your herd. The adventures are much more RPG-like, too, with dungeons and hidden areas accessible only by certain monsters.

Unfortunately, just like in *MR3*, none of this gameplay is fleshed out enough. Simply put, the game's stupidly easy—you can take your first five monsters, raise their power and speed stats aggressively, and use them to whiz through the entire story. Despite this minuscule challenge, the game still takes up mounds of time: Tending to a full five monsters feels more like work than play, and the dungeons are vast, empty and repetitive. I think Tecmo had the right idea here, but it didn't quite follow through.

CJ: *MR3* was so disappointing, I began to think it was time to put the series to sleep for good. But this fourth title is a step away from the needle. First off, *MR4* ditched the crapcartoon cartoon look from the previous title in favor of traditional visuals. The gameplay's deeper, too—Tecmo's added features like real 3D dungeon exploring, multiplatform training regimens for your beasts, and the ability to raise multiple creatures. Now, all *Rancher* needs to do is break from its tedious, menu-driven shackles.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—GARY: Unlike Kevin and CJ, I loved *MR3*. It was my favorite of the bunch—and it still is. There was a purity to the gameplay and the, er, "cartoonish" graphics that I really enjoyed. That's why *MR4* is a bit of a letdown. As a whole, the game seems to offer much more than its predecessors, with its dungeon-crawling side quests and customizable ranch. But taken separately, each of these new elements isn't very impressive—or fun. It's still *Monster Rancher*, though, and it's still great for fans like me, but it's not the step forward I was craving.

THE VERDICTS
OUT OF 10



Publisher: Tecmo
Developer: Tecmo
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Everyone

www.tecmo.com

Xbox

WiiWare

MAGIC: THE GATHERING BATTLEGROUNDS

Fight like a warrior...cry like a fairy



■ The creatures' mismatched art styles clash more fiercely than the monsters themselves.

Good: A nice adaptation of the card game.

Bad: CPU opponents are nightmarishly good.

Voice Actors Attended: The Keanu Reeves School of Acting

GREG S.: I can't imagine many things more boring than a straight-up Xbox version of the *Magic: The Gathering* card game. Luckily, that's not what *Battlegrounds* is. Instead, it's a real-time RPG that features all the creatures and spells found in the superpopular card game. And I guess my luck ran out: Instead of being boring, it's totally unbalanced and infuriating.

It's not so bad when tackling a human opponent, since both of you will have to deal with the game's tragic interface problems. But single player? Forget it. While you fiddle around with unwieldy creature and magic menus, wander your area looking for mana crystals, and deal with laggy battle controls, your CPU opponents work with the reflexes of a god. They never miss a beat and often overwhelm you—even on the easiest levels. It pushes the whole single-player mode way beyond frustrating and ultimately killed the game for me.

So, if you're a *Magic* nut, you'll probably dig this game despite the ridiculous difficulty. But casual fans (or curious RPGers) should just pass it by and invest in a couple starter decks or something instead.

PAUL: Half the fun of *Magic* is devising your own strategy and then testing it against an astute adversary. *Battlegrounds* ignores this crucial element of the card game's appeal. Nearly every match in the single-player campaign makes you cast your most recently learned spell to achieve some gimmicky victory condition (attack with a certain creature, survive for one minute while hopelessly overmatched, etc.). Even in Versus mode (local or Live), constructing your own deck is cumbersome, and you must unlock spells in Campaign mode first. Weak sauce.

XBN—GREG O.: Want to know what a spell of Eternal Dumbness does? It inspires developers to turn a well-loved, strategic card game into a twitchy mess that sends tactics on permanent vacation. Here, *Magic* is about who can collect power-ups and hurt spells the quickest. In single-player mode, the game is a joke, requiring players. To play out a scenario in the one specific way the developers mapped out or face defeat ad nauseam. Where's the creativity? Gone. Where's the magic? MIA.

THE VERDICTS
OUT OF 10



Publisher: Atari
Developer: Secret Level
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Teen

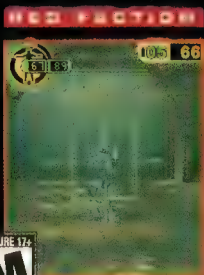
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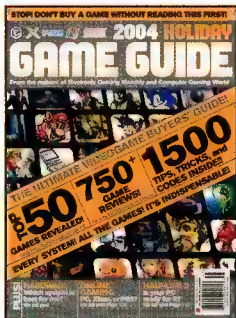
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Xbox @XBOX

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3

They shoot terrorists, don't they?

JOE: If you've avoided squad-based shooters in the past because they seemed dull and (cough) bloodless, you no longer have the slightest excuse, because *Rainbow Six 3* is a near-perfect blend of first-person shooting and smart-guy tactics. In it, you command three operatives to perform such tasks as blowing up a door or taking control of a room. Even advanced orders, like having 'em toss a flashbang grenade into an office right before you rush through another door, require only a few quick button presses. You'll never be fumbling with squad commands when the bullets are flying.

Though even if you were, your squadmates do a good job of taking care of themselves. Dispatch them behind a nearby car, and each will head over and crouch for cover, peek around corners, and scan for targets, just like real soldiers. But as great as these squadmates are to play with, they can't compare to real people. Online co-op play is fantastic—once you learn how to work together, you'll be taking rooms and completing levels with text-

book efficiency—and that's almost impossibly fun. Competing in deathmatches is entertaining as well, since the game offers so many different ways of using your environment to fool opponents.

Rainbow Six 3 plays so well that it could get away with not being the best looking and sounding game in its field, but luckily it is. Only a few minor A.I. problems keep this game from being completely legendary. Even still, it's a must-have title.

MARK: Everyone will enjoy *Rainbow Six 3*'s crisp graphics and awesome lighting effects, but only those with real patience will appreciate the game's challenging, slow-paced missions. Luckily, issuing squad orders is simple, and your teammates position themselves and attack with impressive realism. Enemies show signs of intelligence as well—peeking around corners, running for cover, and firing without exposing themselves. Other times, though, they don't react to gunfire or they stare blankly as you gun down one of their friends. And

the way bad guys suddenly pop in at certain spots every time belongs in *Doom*, not a realistic squad shooter. Unlike Joe, I found multiplayer slow and dull, except for co-op, where the excitement of relying on your friends is intense.

XBN—CHE: Ubisoft's decision to break with tradition pays off big time in *Rainbow Six 3*. Gone are the tedious pre-mission planning sessions, and in their place, an intuitive real-time menu (or voice) system gives you on-the-fly control over your squad in the heat of battle. What makes these real-time commands work so well is the fact that your A.I. teammates are a significant cut above what you'd usually find in a tactical shooter, taking care to check blind spots and find cover during firefights. But the game really shines on Xbox Live, where you play with and against friends and strangers. Although it could have used more online modes and weapon balancing, *Six 3* is a taut, gorgeous masterpiece that's peerless in its class.

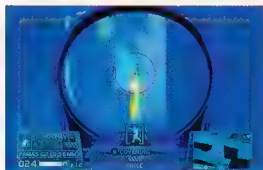


If I Only Had a Brain...
If there are any chinks in *Rainbow Six 3*'s flak jacket, it's the game's often irregular enemy A.I. Sometimes soldiers aren't alerted when a nearby buddy goes down or, even stranger, when they catch a bullet to the noggin themselves. Thankfully, it's infrequent enough to be a minor quibble in a game that's as enjoyable offline as it is on.



Multiplayer Mind Games

There are many creative ways to play *Rainbow Six 3*'s deathmatches. For instance, you can toss a smoke grenade into a room, then flip to thermal vision so you can see nearby opponents clearly and cap them. Also, curtains and spiderwebs in the game sway if you rush past them quickly. But if you duck and double back past them slowly, you can make your foes think you've gone one way when you've actually gone another. Bang.



Quick! Smear mud all over your body to obscure your heat signature. (No, you can't actually do that.)

Good: Fantastic level design and consummate realism.
Bad: Enemies and allies could be a few IQ points smarter.
Toughest Part: Not shooting your teammates



THE VERDICT
OUT OF 10

9.0 7.5 9.0

JOE

MARK

CHE

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft
PLAYERS: 1-2 (16 via Xbox Live or LAN)
ESRB: Mature

www.ubisoft.com

Certain death at your
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12 o'clock



Suggestive Themes
Violence



Microsoft
game studios



Buckle up because *Crimson Skies®* is a deadly ride. Play single player as an air pirate at the helm of a tricked-out 1930s warplane. Because you're fueled by revenge, anyone foolish enough to enter your airspace is an enemy. Play on *Xbox Live™* to pick a dogfight with up to 15 friends and strangers. Just remember, as you enjoy sending opponents into a fiery death spiral, someone probably has you in their crosshairs. Good luck, you are cleared to rule the skies.



it's good to play together.

xbox.com/crimsonskies



Xbox

DRAKE

Better off dead



Good: It's over quickly, thankfully.
Bad: Terrible controls, camera, level design.
No, Seriously, You Guys: It is this bad

PAUL: Drake, an undead Triad gangster, wields double firearms and *Matrix*-like abilities (wall running and bullet time) in his quest for revenge against the actions who killed him. It's cheesy, but the cyber is supposed to make up for the story. Trouble is, the action ain't acting right.

Here's what's painfully difficult in *Drake*: seeing things, going places, and shooting enemies. In other words, everything. The camera is entirely manual until you get close to a wall; then it gets opinionated, showing the floor or nothing at all rather than, you know, bad guys or power-ups. Hellishly inconsistent wall-running and double-jumping abilities make navigating these repetitive levels an excruciating ordeal. Worst of all, the game's autoaim is outright broken. Drake would rather send slugs into nearby walls than retaliate against the thug zapping him from directly ahead in plain view. Amazingly, he gets even more confused if multiple foes are present.

You'll spend more time fighting with *Drake*'s camera and controls than his dastardly robotmen. Unless, of course, you don't play it.

SHAWN: If someone gives you a copy of *Drake*, consider it your moral obligation to destroy it. The game's so broken that it's unplayable: The camera constantly spirals out of control, making platforming impossible, and the autogating is inoperative. More insane contortionist than cold-blooded assassin, when Drake does manage to hit something, he's pointing his guns in the wrong direction. In short, playing this monumental disaster is unconscionable. You'd be better off spending six hours outside ER, warning others of the impending misery.

KEVIN: If the folks behind *XIII* decided to take an unlikely, topless albino man and build a *Max Payne* rip-off around him, they'd likely come up with *Drake*. Unfortunately, the game has so many problems—unfair difficulty, outlandish controls, an alarming tendency on Drake's part to fall off ledges—that comparing it to *Max Payne* at all seems like an affront to Rockstar's adventure. It'd be a bit better with a saner control scheme, but as it is, *Drake* is an exercise in frustration and repeated death.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	PAUL	SHAWN	KEVIN
	2.0	0.5	1.0

Publisher: Majesco
Developer: Iddi
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

www.drakegame.com

Xbox

ONLINE

CRIMSON SKIES: HIGH ROAD TO REVENGE

Soars through the air with the greatest of ease



This pondered airship's about to sink like a lead zeppelin.



Good: Ace control
Bad: Longish load times
For a Kooky Online Twist: Play with gyros only

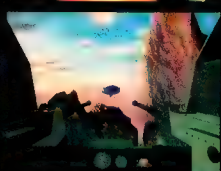
CRISPIN: Just when you thought all air-combat games were stuck on autopilot, along zips this stellar and stylish shooter to kick the genre's tires and light its fires. And spotting why *Skies* soars is easy. It packs booby visuals, from the heat of your plane's engines to the lush jungle canyons of the South American level. And the free-form mission structure (you pick the jobs you want while exploring the massive environments) delivers an outstanding variety of stuff to do. You'll engage in simple escort missions and supply runs one minute, then find yourself locked in epic blimp-on-blimp action the next.

But it's your plane's incredibly fluid feel that turbo boosts the fun here into the stratosphere. Whether you're juking enemies, pulling a high-g speed move, or barreling between Chicago's skyscraper canyons, control is magic—like you're practically flying this thing with your mind. You'll appreciate being so in touch with your aircraft in the outstanding online modes, which again are more fleshed-out and require more strategic play than anything else in the genre.

SHAWN: *Crimson Skies* aces every other air-combat game out there. Sterling controls let you plummet past skyscrapers, shake bogies in congested streets, and power climb to reengage zeppelins high above the city. Imagine *Panzer Dragoon*'s corkscrewing chases and death-defying drops, unscripted and open to interpretation. The bosses, each with its own ingeniously exploitable pattern and weak spot, are just as brilliant. Only the multiplayer

modes—namely splitscreen—are Miquelotast, but it hardly matters.

XBN—GREG O: Plooting the skies red with other people's blood might be the most fun you can have with your pants still on. In *Crimson Skies*' solo play, taking the role of sky pirate Nathan Zachary involves running the gamut of sky-faring combat missions in fantastically pretty locales. Better yet is the multiplayer mode, where the game gives the middle finger to such pleasantries as "story" and serves up white-knuckle dogfighting. As planes cut and turn every way and shrapnel fills the skies, the resultant action is video joy.



Skies offers turrets aplenty, including cannons on moving trucks, trains, and blimps.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	9.0	9.0	8.5
	CRISPIN	SHAWN	GREG O.

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Microsoft
Players: 1-4 (2-16 via Xbox Live or LAN)
ESRB: Teen

www.xbox.com

namco

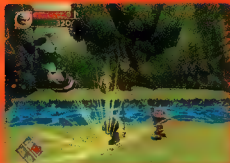
WWW.NAMCO.COM

I-Ninja™

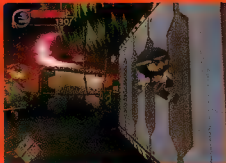


NO ONES TALLER THAN
THE LAST MAN STANDING.

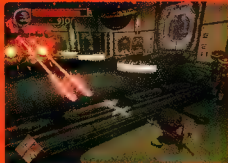
WWW.ININJAGAME.COM



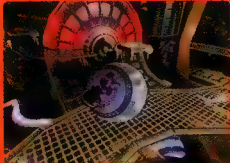
Get Ninja-crazy by collecting power-ups to unlock Ninja's special Rage abilities.



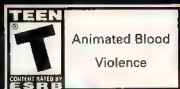
Gravity? Run up walls and tear through levels with moves only the most insane Ninja would try.



Use multiple weapons to take apart any foe that dares stand between Ninja and his missions.



Five huge worlds, mini-quests and grueling missions that will separate the Ninjas from the boys.



PlayStation 2



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A Lotus 540 leads through the famous (well, relatively) Karussell turn at the Nürburgring circuit.



Xbox

ONLINE

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2



Holy s---, Batman!

DEMIAN: If you like the racing games, and you like the Xbox Live, then buckle the f up. This is the best realistic (well, fairly realistic) racer since *Gran Turismo 3*, and in many ways, it's even more fun.

PGR2 is also one of the first Xbox Live Aware titles, so not only can you play against random yahoos via Live, but you can also see how your scores for each single-player event stack up against the rest of the world. It's genius.

The other genius part of *PGR2* is the Kudos system, which rewards players for powerslides, overtaking rivals, and generally driving like your hair's on fire. It adds to the game an arcadey aspect that's missing from more hardcore sim racers—if you find *Gran Turismo* to be equal parts daunting and boring, you won't feel that way about *PGR2*.

Of course, it wouldn't be a review without some belyaching. The tracks (all based on real locations) are excellent...except when you're racing at night and it's so dark that you can't see the apex of the next turn. The biggest problem, though, is the

prison-rules A.I. Doesn't seem like the owner/operator of a Porsche 959 would be quite so zealous to punt you into the guardrail, but turns out he is. Computer-controlled cars are oblivious to your presence, and a lot of frustrating crashes result.

Don't let that deter you, though—many events are solo or versus just one other car anyway, and when you go online, you'll find real people are just as cutthroat. Despite the flaws, *PGR2* is brilliant.

GREG S: *PGR2* is the ultimate refinement of the formula Bizarre Creations has been working on since *Metropolis Street Racer* hit Dreamcast: Sleek visuals, tight control, and that wacky Kudos system combine to form one helluva racer.

Still, all this adds up to only a minor improvement on the first *PGR*...except for the amazing new Xbox Live component. This online-all-the-time thing in *PGR2* might sound like a lame gimmick, but it really adds immense replayability. Real-time scoreboards and ghost cars of the world's finest

players will keep you playing the offline game, if only to get that coveted spot on the top 10 list. Not to mention the sense of competition it instills in you. What could be better than finding the No. 1 player online and kicking his ass in a race?

XBM—CHE: Online gaming is currently what sets Xbox apart from its competition, and *PGR2* is the first title to take full advantage of what it means to be Live-enabled. Sure, series mainstays such as photo-realistic car models, flawless handling, and Kudos style points return in the sequel, but it's the total online integration that makes this the new standard to topple. As you progress through the game in solo fashion, your best times will constantly be posted on Xbox Live for all to worship and, ultimately, dethrone. So even as you play the game offline, you never feel alone in your need for speed. Since there's so much to rave about in *Gotham*, I'll just say this: You won't find a more value-packed racer anywhere—on any system.

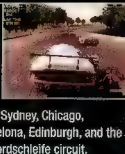


Enzo Ferrari
The oddly dubbed Ferrari Enzo Ferrari made its debut in an early demo of *Project Gotham Racing 2*, even before the supercar ever appeared on an auto show dais. For most gamers, it's the closest we'll ever get to the 600hp, \$652,000 car named after Ferrari's founder. And it's definitely the only chance we'll get to smash it into a guardrail at 220 mph while listening to Beanie Machine.

Kicking the Tires on PGR2

Tracks

The second *Gotham* does even more globe-trotting than the first; you'll visit Stockholm, Florence, Moscow, Hong Kong, Yokohama, Sydney, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Barcelona, Edinburgh, and the 14-mile Nürburgring Nordschleife circuit.



Kudos

Drivers earn Kudo points for sliding, overtaking, catching air, and driving cleanly. Do these things simultaneously and you'll earn extra combo points. If you hit a wall, you'll lose your combo bonus—but not the whole pot, like in the last *PGR*.



Cars

With 14 different car series (Compact Sports, Pacific Muscle, Track Specials, etc.) and six to 10 cars per series, there's no shortage of highfalutin' automobiles. Including some you've never heard of, such as the Iseni, Delfino Force, and Koenigsagg CC V6S.



Good: Just about everything

Bad: A.I. cars have a death wish

Second Greatest Word in the English Language: Kudos



THE VERDICT
100% GREAT

9.5 9.5 9.5

DEMIAN

GREG S.

CHE

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Bizarre Creations
Players: 1-4 (2-3 via Xbox Live)
ESRB: Everyone

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NBA INSIDE DRIVE 2004

Left out of the starting lineup



■ Don't let these images fool you. *NBA Inside Drive 2004* is all about utilizing your big men.

Good: Low-post moves

Bad: Little innovation

Increase: The difficulty. The default setting is a joke



BRYAN: Innovation is a necessity when you're pitted against stalwarts like *ESPN* and *Live*. Sadly, Microsoft's *NBA Inside Drive 2004* fails to do anything exciting or revolutionary, nor does it execute anything any better than other basketball offerings do. It's tough to get devoid about a Season mode that's devoid of interesting options, a default single-player difficulty level that's far too low, and an overall lack of cool, new experiences (like *ESPN NBA Basketball's* fantastic 24/7 mode). I also suggest hitting the mute button on your television remote instead of listening to these cheesy announcers—the trio of Kevin Calabro, Kenny Smith, and Marques Johnson has to go.

Even with these faults, this year's edition of *Drive* is a step up, albeit a small one. Online options are plentiful, thanks to the XSN Sports website, and the visuals are definitely eye pleasing. Also, it's refreshing to see gameplay emphasizing low-post moves. Still, these improvements feel routine. Until Microsoft brings something truly new to the hardwood, I'm afraid *Drive* is gonna remain a benchwarmer.

JOHN R: *Inside Drive 2004*

features a number of minor improvements to last year's game (better graphics, a couple of new moves and control options, smarter CPU A.I.), but for the most part, the basic gameplay is essentially the same. Xbox Live support is a huge plus this year, but considering you can already play online with Sega's superior *ESPN 2K4*, should you even care? Yes—maybe. If the idea of participating in online leagues fills you with glee, *Drive* is the only game in town (this year) that'll fulfill your needs. But if not, go with *ESPN* instead.

PATRICK: This year's *Drive* delivers competent, good-looking b-ball action, but it's still a tad sketchy. Some of the gameplay tweaks work—enriched defensive A.I. makes scoring a challenge, and the new low-post moves make it easier to execute in the half court. But running the break, even with the fleetest of teams, proves difficult. The game feels skewed toward the big men, as if the developer decided to emphasize low-post scoring with cover-boy Shaq, at the expense of perimeter play.

THE VERDICTS
(OUT OF 10)

6.0
BRYAN

7.5
JOHN R.

6.5
PATRICK

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: High Voltage
Players: 1-4 (2-8 via Xbox Live)
ESRB: Everyone

www.xsnsports.com



■ New songs to dance to can be downloaded cheaply over Xbox Live. Now where's "Butterfly"?

Xbox

@XBLIVE

DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION ULTRAMIX

Dance, Xbox, dance!



■ A new interface and online play might be enough to get jaded *DDR* players interested again.

Good: Online play and downloadable songs

Bad: Number of previously used songs may bore seasoned vets

Only Cheaters: Use the control pad when playing online



CJ: Recently, I've found it hard to get energized about new *DDRs*. But *Ultramix* throws caution to the winds and gives the series the injection of fun it sorely needed. Updated graphics are only the beginning. The other tweaks, like the ability to see your highest grade for all three difficulties on a song at once, sneak up on you, but they make so much sense you wonder why it took this long for them to be implemented.

In addition to the normal game mode, *Ultramix* offers an outstanding single-player Challenge mode that gives you various objectives to complete that'll put your dancing skills to the ultimate test. Why hasn't this been a part of every *DDR*? But why play solo when you can log on to Xbox Live and compete against others across the country or download additional songs? *Ultramix's* Live connectivity is easily its best feature. It even lets you know whether the people you're playing against (up to four simultaneously) are using dance pads or regular controllers. How cool is that?

The only major fault I can find with this *DDR* is that its song list ain't that great. But with downloadable songs, that's fixable.

JENNIFER: I never realized

what a *DDR* loser I was until they took away the Beginner difficulty level and Lesson mode in *Ultramix*. I can hold my own on Light, but I think the training wheels helped me, if only psychologically. Still, though not newbie friendly, *Ultramix* is a much-needed addition to the Xbox stable—you people need to shake a leg! Plus, I'm guessing the Xbox Live version is gonna knock *somebody's* socks off, literally. And with the ability to download new songs, this mix is as ultra as it gets.

GAMEROW-CARRIE: I know hardcore *DDR* fans will be all about online play and new game modes. But I couldn't care less. I just want to have fun, and *Ultramix* is way too hard. I miss the Lesson mode in *DDR-MAX2*, which made me feel like I could practice and actually improve. Plus, there's no way to turn off the "boos" without turning off the commentary altogether, and the continual jabs infuriated me. And there are too few songs with low difficulty. OK, I like the game, but I'm a sore loser. I hope some of the downloadable songs are easier.

THE VERDICTS
(OUT OF 10)

8.5
CJ

8.0
JENNIFER

7.0
CARRIE

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami Hawaii
Players: 1-4
ESRB: Everyone

www.konami.com

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Neverwinter Nights: Gold



Neverwinter Nights:
Hordes of the Underdark



The Temple of Elemental Evil:
A Classic Greyhawk Adventure



ETA to total ghoulie-whacking boredom? One hour, ten minutes.

Xbox

GRABBED BY THE GHOULIES

Something retarded this way comes

Good: High production values
Bad: Far too repetitive
Valueover Work Provided By: A special-ed class

SHAWN: Ever wonder what it's like to operate a traveling carnival attraction? This haunted house has enough hokey Halloween music and kids screaming at uncanny crap to scare any dropout back to night school. But I'm getting ahead of myself. *Grabbed by the Ghoulies'* campiness and simple fights are fun at first. Intuitive and precise analog controls let you mash monsters instead of buttons, and you can use whatever household object is at hand to keep the encroaching boogymen at bay.

Once you've broken your hundredth chair over the head of a hunchback, however, you'll find for something, anything else to do. The routine never really changes, only the rules. So instead of clearing out a roomful of creeps, you'll have to kill 'em within a time limit, in a certain order, or without getting hit. Somewhere along the line, you'll have had so much of the gobbledeyook, the 10-cent scams, and senselessly doing the same thing disguised as something else, that all the fancy effects your Xbox can muster won't keep you from feeling like a carry.

SHANE: I sure hope Microsoft didn't pony up the big bucks to purchase hotshot developer Rare in order to publish stuff like *this*. Admittedly, *Ghoulies* looks fantastic—the wonderfully detailed rooms (packed with oodles of breakable junk) handily show off the Xbox's graphical prowess. But gameplaywise, this is a disaster. The ultramit combat gets stale after an hour, but thankfully, you're already about a fourth of the way through the mercifully short game by then. Factor in horribly dippy voice samples and you've got yet another reason to avoid this exercise in annoyance.

XBN—GREG O: *Grabbed by the Ghoulies* ranks right up there with *Halo* and *Metal Gear Solid 2* in that they are all, in fact, games. Neither particularly fun nor frightening, the glossy-looking *Ghoulies* features dull, turn-off-your-brain brawling wherein players tap (or, if you're lazy, hold down) the right analog stick to make young hero Cooper punch, kick, or slam whatever monster happens to be near him...again and again. Expect sticker shock from *Ghoulies*, but little else.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	5.5	4.0	6.5
	SHAWN	SHANE	GREG O.

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Rare
Players: 1
ESRB: Everyone

www.xbox.com

Xbox

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

Weapons of crass destruction

Just when you thought it was safe to stay on land, the Shark Gun strikes.



Good: Unique (and useful) weapons
Bad: Too many repeated mission objectives
Get This: The robot?!? He likes to drink tea! How crazy!

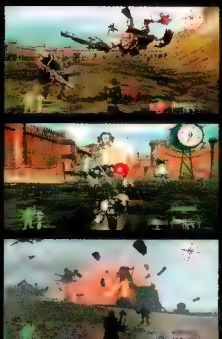
JOE: Hell, I like blowing \$3% up as much as the next guy, but these days, mindless gunplay gets you only so far. Sure, *Armed and Dangerous* has some inventive weapons, but it's still a pretty basic third-person shooter—and one with dated graphics and a dopey sense of humor, at that. ("Oooh! Look at me! I'm Scottish! Isn't that quirky?!")

The game has a bawdy of huge, sprawling stages, but the level design is sloppy, and the same objectives pop up far too often. (If I live my whole life without ever having to blow up another house with a bull's eye on it or rescue another peasant....) Even with the occasional gun turret level, the gameplay still gets repetitive over time. Some multiplayer action would have helped, but there isn't any...at all.

Maybe this is another "love it or hate it!" LucasArts game like *Gladius*, but I'd rather *Armed and Dangerous* had fewer missions and a lot more polish.

CRISPIN: It's one of the ugliest Xbox games you'll ever play (it's so...brown), and shooters don't come much stranger (fans of *Giants: Citizen Kabuto* (PS2) can expect similar har-hars). But fugly duckling *Armed and Dangerous* has a great personality that keeps you hooked longer than similar yet more blasé blasters like *Brute Force*. Sure, I got tired of too many rescue-the-peasants missions, and the game needs a larger arsenal (plus more levels with the superfun jetpack). But the open-ended level design—and especially the nifty fortress-defense stages—made for many moments of shooter Zen.

XBN—GREG O: *Armed and Dangerous* holds some of the greatest videogame weapons ever—the Black Hole bomb sucks, while the Shark Gun bites. These armaments complement delightfully frenetic gameplay that has enemies jumping out of windows to attack, buildings exploding with their roofs rocketing into space, and huge zeppelins falling to the ground in a twisted mass of metal. It's excessive carnage done wonderfully, broken up with great laugh-out-loud humor. Sadly, the game loses its punch as it wears on, presenting players with repetitive rail-gun shooting and mundane peasant-rescuing challenges.



Nearly every building in *Armed and Dangerous* can be blown up. We checked.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	6.5	7.0	8.0
	JOE	CRISPIN	GREG O.

Publisher: LucasArts
Developer: Planet Moon
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

www.lucasarts.com

Halo Invades PC



HALO

Join the battle. Live the epic adventure yourself. Unlock the secrets of Halo to save mankind from the ruthless Covenant swarms. Take the fight online in customizable head-to-head multiplayer competitions against up to 15 rival Master Chiefs. Break open a redesigned arsenal complete with the wicked new fuel rod gun. Then go mobile in the redeveloped Rocket Warthog and Banshee. This is Halo evolved.



Now with online multiplayer



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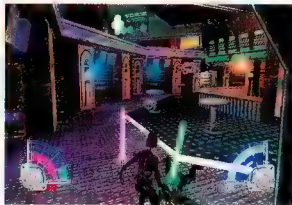
Microsoft
gamestudio

www.microsoft.com/Games/Halo





Three against one—up here a very bad thing, about five.



An empty cantina can only mean one thing: a Wookiee.

Xbox @NLINE

STAR WARS JEDI KNIGHT: JEDI ACADEMY

Left off the honor roll

BRYAN: Choosing a good school is tough, especially when you desire classes like Lightsabers 101 and Intro to the Force. *Jedi Academy* covers these subjects and more, yet the material isn't always presented in the best manner possible.

This latest game in the *Jedi Knight* series thrusts you into the role of a Padawan learner jet-setting across the galaxy to hone your skills. Luckily, your training offers tons of varied thrills across a multitude of missions—you'll rescue prisoners from a man-eating rancor monster, defuse bombs while evading Boba Fett, and even explore the murky depths of Darth Vader's castle. (Since when did Darth Vader have a castle?)

Sounds like another can't-miss *Star Wars* game for Xbox, right? Well, not quite. Lightsaber battles now take precedence over first-person shooting, which in turn makes combat a rote, button-mashing experience. Also, cycling through Force powers via the directional pad while hackin' away at the enemy is a terrible hassle. Unfortunately, the

graphics don't do much to help the cause. These visuals are mediocre at best and not up to par with today's Xbox standards.

Thankfully, the hefty number of multiplayer options keeps me from calling *Jedi Academy* a glorified summer school, but it still isn't worth \$50. Even the most die-hard fans are better off renting this one for the weekend.

CRISPIN: It's got brutal Force powers, taunttauns and speeders to ride, guest appearances by *Wars* stars Luke, Chewie, and Boba Fett, and stellar mission variety (everything from luring Jedi away from the dark side to visiting Casa de Vader). But despite that hell of a syllabus, this *Jedi Academy* sometimes barely packs the excitement of a business-school mixer. Blame the lightsaber combat, which although flashy, is clunky and imprecise. A few missions (especially a snow-blind trek across Hoth and a crash-and-burn speederbike level) nearly push the game to the dark side. Fortunately, addic-

tive online modes will keep you playing if you get sick of the single-player stuff.

SHOE: You can *always* make a great game...on paper. But what happens when a bantha takes a big crap on that paper? You get *Academy*: all the right ideas, none of the execution. A Jedi-in-training with upgradeable skills, an intriguing story based on the good trilogy, Force powers, lightsabers...what can I wrong? Let me tell you...

First off, *Academy* looks and plays like a first-person shooter from a long, long time ago with flat graphics and zero-IQ enemies. The controls are horrid—why let players mess with speeder bikes and dual lightsabers if the steering isn't worth a damn and all attacks have the same effectiveness? Multiplayer could've been terrific with its many modes, but button-mashing lightsaber duels and hard-to-aim guns ruin the fun. If you were looking forward to this, do yourself a favor and play *Halo* again—while humming the *Star Wars* theme.

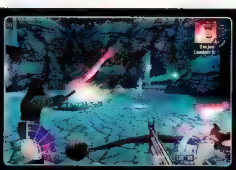


Familiar Faces
Throughout *Jedi Academy*, a number of well-known characters from the *Star Wars* universe make your acquaintance. In one early mission, the hairy beast Chewbacca provides you with Wookiee backup. Others include the lovable robotic duo of G-3P0 and R2-D2, and you'll even have a brief encounter with Boba Fett, minus the Sarlacc Pit.



(Jedi) Physical Education

What better way to interact with your Padawan classmates than in *Jedi Academy*'s multiplayer modes. All the essential match types are here: Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Duels, Capture the Flag, and Siege. The last option is team-based scenario-style play where one group infiltrates a location such as a base on the ice planet of Hoth or a Sith temple, while the other team defends it by any means necessary. Siege is available only online, but is easily the most enjoyable match type if you have enough people (try for at least four).



Surprise your saber-happy enemies by bustin' out the guns in multiplayer games.

Good: Multiplayer modes
Bad: Haphazard lightsaber battles
Not a Surprise: Another Hoth level in a *Star Wars* game



THE HEROIC'S RATING

6.0 6.5 3.0
BRYAN CRISPIN SHOE

Publisher: LucasArts
Developer: Raven
Software/Vicarious Visions
Players: 1-2 offline
(2-8 via Xbox Live or LAN)
ESRB: Teen
www.lucasarts.com



■ Either Dandenault just delivered a check, or a spontaneous square dance just broke out.

Xbox



NHL RIVALS 2004

Five minute major for sucking



■ (Left) Taking face-offs is extra fun when you can't see the ref drop the puck.



Good: Decent graphics.
Bad: Totally broken gameplay.
Save Your Money: And buy ESPN NHL hockey



GREG S: I have given a name to my pain, and it is *NHL Rivals*. From the second you take to the ice, you'll notice huge problems plaguing this game. First of all, the face-off camera obscures the referee behind one of the players, meaning you can't see the puck being dropped. Then, once play actually starts, everything moves with syrupy slowness and the players' momentum feels very wrong. For kicks, try out the exclusive "pivot" feature (where you can skate one way and turn another)—it's so clunky, you'll never bother using it after you've played your first period.

My biggest problems, though, are with the unevenness of the penalties called and shots that go in. I've been dragged down during a breakaway and seen a penalty called only once (not to mention I've never been given a penalty shot). And I've seen slap shots come off defensemen's feet, just because they happen to be near the guy who's supposed to be taking the shot. The whole game feels terribly sloppy and unfinished—there is absolutely no reason to even play *Rivals*.

DEMIAN: Launching a new sports-game franchise may be tough, but there's no excuse for releasing a game that doesn't feel finished. *Rivals* is fundamentally flawed: Your teammates constantly wander offside; you actually slow down when you get the puck; players are called for roughing when all they did was bump into another guy; goalies never leave the crease; penalty shots are never called. I even saw a CPU player slip the puck under his net to score on his own team. Fifty dollars for this? Are you high?

JOHN ■ I think Greg and Demian woke up on the wrong side of the bed this morning (just hopefully not the same bed). Granted, *Rivals* is clearly not the best hockey game in town, but for a first effort, it could've been worse. All the basics are in place; what the game lacks is finesse. Spotty AI leads to a lot of frustrating (and often ridiculous) situations, and the overall pacing is too slow. Support for online leagues is a big plus; if Microsoft can up the realism next year, *Rivals* could be a contender.

THE VERDICT
OUT OF 10

3.5
GREG S.

6.5
DEMIAN

6.5
JOHN R.

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Microsoft
Players: 1-4
ESRB: Everyone

www.xbox.com

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tom's hardware guide

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■ Extreme AND in your face? Well someone please think of the children?



GameCube

1080° AVALANCHE

The thrill of speed. The agony of a busted tricks system

SHOE: What *Need for Speed: Underground* does for the rice-rocket set, *1080° Avalanche* will do for fans of snow-sport racing. You can't beat its comea-stripping sense of speed. The streaking blur lines, shaking screen, and rumbling controller all come together to make you think, "Oh snap, I better slow down or I'm gonna die." Don't worry about that, though. The well-designed courses encourage you to lurch and rocket all the way down, with easy-access shortcuts that you won't have to let off the accelerator to nail.

Most of the modes work around this all-or-nothing philosophy. Take a second to check out your surroundings, and you won't win the versus-CPU race or get the qualifying times in Gate Challenge (though you can take it easy in the inappropriately named Time Trial and look for hidden gold coins). Take a second to even think, and the final *Avalanche* levels will straight-out kill you.

But why call a game *1080°* anything if the emphasis is on racing? Yes, it has a half-pipe, big

ramp, and terrain park, but the combo system is silly. Like Xbox's *Amped 2*, *Avalanche* is going for a more deliberate, slower, and stylish approach, not *Tony Hawk*'s school of cramming in as many tricks as possible. But this doesn't work so well here. You rarely get enough air to squeeze in big combos, so the whole tricks system feels subdued, almost an afterthought. For freeriders, not freestylers.

GMR—MILKMAN: Even if you weren't to compare this to the recently released snow masterpiece *SSX 3*, *Avalanche* would still come up a little short. In its defense, *1080°* offers the thrilling sense of speed and danger that *SSX 3* lacks, plus it has decent handling and a cooler cast of characters than EA's lot. But when all of its gameplay modes and disappointing multiplayer options are handicapped by game-ending obstacles (you can actually become trapped by a fence) and unnecessarily fussy controls (rotating the stick to maintain balance sucks), the once-mighty *1080°* is relegated to bench-

warmer status in no time at all. Sadly, a handful of unlockable fan-service goodies (an NES-controller snowboard, anyone?) isn't enough to change the fact that *1080°* just hasn't kept up with the times.

SHAWN: What the hell? *1080°*'s irritating trick system recognizes combos executed only after pre-determined pauses. And, what with twirling the analog stick while hammering the other keys, I inadvertently learned to play the piano by the time I landed one high-scoring string. The time trials are no better—I shattered records by 30 seconds and still couldn't progress to the next circuit. Silly me, thinking speed mattered. It seems I was supposed to collect concealed coins instead. How's that for yellow snow? Admittedly, the straightforward slope riding is all right, but even so, *Avalanche* still can't compete with *SSX 3*.



Decisions Decisions
Which to buy, *1080° Avalanche* or *SSX 3*? With its boundless backcountry, bi-level boost meter for pull-out-the-stops Super-Uber moves, tighter controls, and deeper trick set (including handplants and board presses), EA's snowboarding game offers the more rewarding ride for those who can afford only one lift ticket. Only *1080°*, however, offers four-player splitscreen play and the opportunity to tackle the slopes on Mario-themed snowboards and old-school Nintendo controllers.



■ Multiplayer offers a few racing thrills but little else.

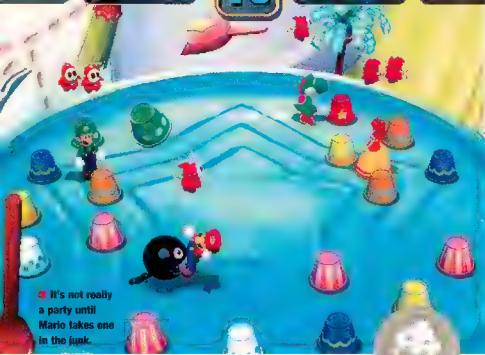
Good: Lots of shortcuts and an incredible sense of speed.
Bad: The trickiest tricks system we've ever tried tripping.
Bye-Bye Birdie: Use the normal controller and feel the rumbles!



THE VERDICTS (out of 10)	7.5	7.0	5.5
	SHOE	MILKMAN	SHAWN

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Nintendo ST
Players: 1-4 (split-screen or LAN)
ESRB: Everyone

www.nintendo.com



It's not really a party until Mario takes one in the junk.

GameCube

MARIO PARTY 5

Even more sickly sweet minigames

Good: New modes that don't fit the *Mario Party* mold.
Bad: The new stages are lifeless, but...

Do-It-Yourself: ...now, you customize them as you play



SHOE: When the fat plumber hosts a new *Party*, it's always two steps forward, one step back. Each chapter in his party-game series improves upon its predecessor but always manages to leave something behind, thus cleverly avoiding the perfect package, forcing you to buy more editions. *Mario Party 5's* stages, for example, are the worst yet. You'll dig the multitiered layouts but you'll yawn at the lack of interesting features like *MP4's* giant roulette wheel or lottery booths. *MPS* makes up for it, however, by letting you place a wide variety of good or bad "events" on the boards' spaces, customizing the level as you play.

For most *Party* animals, that won't be reason enough to spend another 50 bucks, but that's not where the biggest improvements are. The single-player experience is faster paced and has different rules (so it's not just the *Party* mode with CPU opponents), and several new un-*Mario-Party*-like modes (like *Card Tanks* or *Super Duel*, where you create tanks and battle them against friends) really add some disc to this venerable formula.

CJ: Another *Mario Party*, so soon? Yes, and while I'm disappointed that the series has still not made the jump online (c'mon, it'd be perfect!), this fifth iteration hasn't lost that special touch. It's full of little tweaks, like an improved single-player mode, better pacing (with a little help from the Koopa Kids), the ability to deviously place event capsules around the board, and fun li'l hockey, volleyball, and card side games. A few of the "new" minigames are reshaped, but it's hard to find fault in that when no one's been able to throw a better party game than this.

GMR—ANDREW: No other game brings out the best in me as a gamer and the worst in me as a human being at the same time. Almost as if by design, *Mario Party's* innocent window dressing provides a delightful contrast to the relentless vulgarity and obscenity that the unpredictable gameplay generates. Some of the new minigames are a little stale, and some concepts are recycled, but the new capsule system functions well as the necessary fresh coat of paint. Buy it, call some friends, and let chaos reign.



THE VERDICTS
 (OUT OF 10)
8.0 8.0 8.0
 SHOE CJ ANDREW

Publisher: Nintendo
 Developer: Hudson
 Players: 1-4
 ESRB: Everyone

www.nintendo.com

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■ Gigi, the gal in rabbit pajamas, is on fire—wait, wait, OK now—literally!

Good: Got that Spumco (Ron & Stimp) couch.
Bad: It's no Tony Hawk
Most Disturbingly Phallic Character Ever: The Johnson Bros.



DEMIAN: Some people (and in this case, some means Paul) just aren't going to like *Hypergrind*. Yes, it's a simplistic *Tony Hawk* rip-off. It looks like a kid's game, even if some of the characters and environments—designed by Spumco, creators of *Ron & Stimp*—display a subversive, unkidlike crudeness. The Story mode goals are seriously repetitive, and a decent player can beat the game in a single sitting. But...it's kinda fun.

JENNIFER: The edgy cartoon trappings kept me interested in this game far longer than its actual gameplay. Which is to say, about an hour—or maybe three, if you count the two times I had to restart because I was still figuring out the Story mode's rules that don't let you retry events (not even once). After that, I kept playing only to determine whether *Hypergrind* brought anything more to the table besides funny cartoons, average skateboarding, and wackily designed levels that are more confusing than anything else. In the end, my answer was no.

GameCube

GO! GO! HYPERGRIND



Perhaps So-So Hypergrind is more accurate



■ You never knew when Mother Nature's gonna unleash a great torrent of paint.

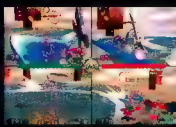
Hypergrind borrows the clever *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* concept—that there's an alternate-reality Toon World populated by wily coyotes, wisecracking rabbits, and presumably, falling grand pianos. *Hypergrind*'s eight bizarre levels are littered with tonish hazards, such as huge mallets, spinning saw blades, and steamrollers—and you're *supposed* to get yourself as badly mangled as possible. Run into a blade, for example, and not only will you be decapitated for a few moments, but any tricks you do will count toward a combo string. This madcap masochism is *Hypergrind*'s best—and only—distinguishing feature.

PAUL: By stealing shamelessly from the *Tony Hawk* formula (complete with two-minute time limit), *Hypergrind*'s straight-up trick runs manage to be pretty fun. Too bad all the other events built around hazards that crush, electrocute, or decapitate your boarder are just lame. Recycled cartoon clichés make the self-inflicted pain more boring than funny. A confusing status system, creepy animations, and obnoxious music don't help matters. Enough with the *Tony Hawk* wannabes already.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	6.0	5.0	5.0
	DEMIAN	JENNIFER	PAUL

Publisher: Atlas
Developer: Pponchi
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Teen

www.atlus.com



■ It wouldn't be a GameCube title without a spiltscreen mode!

GameCube

GOTCHA FORCE

When good robots go bad



■ Not your imagination—action figures really have gotten larger lately.

Good: Addictive, fast-paced fighting
Bad: Gets old quickly
Recipe: *Virtual On* meets *Pokémon*

KEVIN: *Gotcha Force* is a queer little chestnut—you may dismiss it as a throwaway baby game from the screenshots, but play it and you'll be smitten. Gameplay couldn't be simpler: You control stylish robot toys in arena battles against rival playthings. Do well, and you can earn new bots with exotic attacks and healing powers. And that's it. Although *Gotcha Force* is pretty low budget (the story is told in static, 2D anime-style panels), the battles that make up 98 percent of the game are intensely addictive. They remind me of *Virtual On*'s robot mayhem, in fact, although they're not quite so fast paced. Each fighter has one main weapon and several auxiliary skills, and tandem attacks with your allies are possible, so the game's got this deep, strategic angle beneath its cute exterior.

SHAWN: Equal parts cutesy and cool, *Gotcha Force*'s story of toy-sized warriors from another world will win the hearts of the tykes in your house, but won't interest the gamer with so much as a single hair on his balls. The arena-based combat, the dialogue consists of goo goos and gah gahs, and the difficulty curve seems designed to boost a baby's confidence. Overall, it's an all right little game, provided you're still in Pampers.

I have only one complaint, but it's a fairly big one—beat the Story mode, and all that's left is multiplayer battles and robot collecting. The game's worth at least a rental for that two-day window of addiction, but it lacks much lasting depth. Despite that, though, GC owners would be missing out if they skipped this entirely.

CJ: If you've been searching high and low for an anime-style version of Sega's robot combat game *Virtual On*, call off your bloodhounds—*Gotcha Force* is it. Its sweet-as-candy visuals and gotta-catch-em-all style of collecting will appeal to *Pokémon* graduates, but its battle-battle-and-more-battle gameplay will leave others (myself included) somewhat empty. The matches are initially fun (once you get used to the confusing camera), but the repetitive warfare gets mighty old after a few hours. Even the "Story" mode is disappointingly devoid of any real narrative or excitement.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.0	5.0	5.0
	KEVIN	SHAWN	CJ

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Players: 1-4
ESRB: Everyone


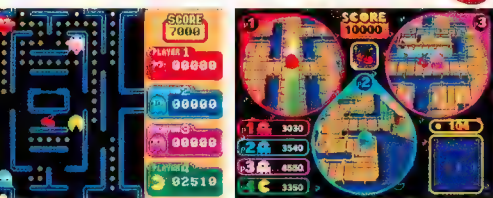
www.capcom.com



GameCube

PAC-MAN VS.

Four-player fever

■ (Left) How the player controlling Pac-Man sees the game. (Right) The ghosts' viewpoint.

Good: Fun, simple, and addictive.
Bad: Mario's overly dramatic commentary.
Available Free With: Pac-Man World 2 and R. Racing Evolution

SHANE: Thanks to *Pac-Man Vs.*, Nintendo's diabolical dream of making everyone attach a GBA to their GameCube via a \$13 cable might finally come to fruition. *Vs.* completely rethinks the venerated *Pac-Man* concept by allowing players to control the ghosts. Conceptually, the gameplay sounds incredibly limited, but everything's so balanced that it's actually quite fun. It works because the player controlling Pac-Man sees the entire maze, thanks to the discreet GBA screen, while the ghosts must make do with a limited viewing range on the television. Seemingly subtle bits borrowed from the arcade original (like the fact that Pac rounds corners and travels through warps faster than the ghosts) blend with new ideas (the ghost players can see more of the board by chomping fruit) to add just enough strategy to keep it interesting. Too bad the audiovisual trappings don't match up to the gameplay. Levels based on the classic game look sleek and stylish, but the new, thematic stages are too garish. And you'll want to mute the frantic music and Mario's squealing commentary. Ugh.

G. FORD: Do the little tykes think you're whack when you boot up those crusty old games on *Activision Anthology*? Do they wonder why you can't play 21st-century titles that feature more than four colors? Well, give them a history lesson with *Pac-Man Vs.*, and see if they don't discover a new appreciation for the oldies. Yeah, this multiplayer reimagining of the überclassic is a net-rick pony that won't keep you hooked as long as *Mario Kart*, but it's fun as heck and the best use of connectivity yet.

GAMENOW—PHIL: If Nintendo's seemingly ridiculous focus on GC-to-GBA connectivity results in games like *Pac-Man Vs.*, I'm all for it. The thrill of the chase rarely gets more intense than when you're yelling Pac-Man's whereabouts to your two ghostly partners. Trying to work together to catch the Pac and betray everyone to win the match yourself opens the door to all types of exciting, treacherous strategy. Just make sure you have three WaveBird controllers on hand to avoid a tangle of wires.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

8.0	7.5	9.0
SHANE	G. FORD	PHIL

Publisher: Namco
 Developer: Nintendo
 Players: 1-4
 ESRB: Everyone

www.namco.com

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■ Unlike most RPGs, combat is different against every enemy in *M&L*, which keeps it exciting.

GBA

MARIO & LUIGI: SUPERSTAR SAGA

Brotherly love

Good: Exciting combat, great sense of humor
Bad: A slow underwater sequence and single fetch quest
Games From: *Dr. Mario*, *Mario RPG*, *Luigi's Mansion*, and *Mario*

MARK: *Mario & Luigi* is everything your typical RPG is not—fast-paced, action-oriented, colorful and lighthearted—yet it's the best game the genre has seen on the GBA. The game's basic mechanic, where Luigi and Mario are each assigned a single button for their actions so the player can control the Bros. separately, works brilliantly. In the main world and dungeons it creates plenty of options for great puzzles (i.e., Mario jumps on Luigi and together they can spin to a faraway ledge, or Luigi smashes Mario with a hammer to fit into a hole and reach a switch). In combat teamwork is used for devastating combo attacks you slowly learn and then master.

Not that the fights needed any more spicing up. With tons of different enemies, their unique strengths and weaknesses, and your ability to dodge any attack, *Mario & Luigi* never suffers from typical RPG "just keep tapping A" battle fatigue. Outstanding animation, clever dialogue, wonderful mini-games, and hilarious Nintendo-related inside jokes—*Mario and Luigi* is another polished, thoroughly enjoyable adventure in the same vein as *Mario RPG* and *Paper Mario* before it.

KEVIN: *Mario & Luigi* is exactly the sort of RPG the GBA needed. It's not overly long like *Golden Sun*, it's not too difficult like *Lufia*, and—for a change—it's not about collecting little fuzzy things. Instead, it's just a simple, endearing little adventure. The graphics are consistently impressive, the story's well-written, and just when you think you're getting bored, the game introduces some wacky gimmick to recapture your attention. Just don't expect a saga on the scale of *Paper Mario*—the game ends far sooner than you'd expect.

GMR—ANDREW: After the double dose of *Luigi's Mansion* and *Mario Sunshine*, it's about time we got something a little more traditional from the famous brothers.

Mario & Luigi is a wonderfully playful adventure with great wit and self-referential humor, bringing back fond memories of past Mario games. But it's not just all jokes—the timing-based battle system seems simple, but is deceptively deep: The back and forth flow of combat between the Bros. and their foes makes every battle fun. The charm, the humor, the puzzles, the action... the best GBA game this year.



■ With all its minigames and special sections, *M&L*'s gameplay changes constantly.

THE VERDICT
OUT OF 10

9.0 8.5 9.0

MARK KEVIN ANDREW

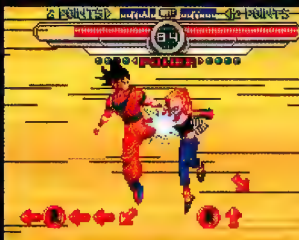
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Nintendo
Players: 1
ESRB: Everyone

www.nintendo.com

GBA

DRAGON BALL Z: TAIKETSU

For serious Saiyans only



■ Your favorite characters face off in, well, a vast sea of urine.



Good: Large characters for a handheld fighter
Bad: Not deep enough for serious fighters
Japanese 101: "Taiketsu" means "confrontation"

JOHN R: Like the two *Legacy of Goku* titles that preceded it, *DBZ: Taiketsu* is an average-at-best game shielded by pretty visuals and the enormously popular *Dragon Ball Z* license. To be fair, this is probably more than enough for your average 10-year-old, but if you're in the market for a deep, well-balanced handheld fighter with a good amount of replay value (like, say, *Street Fighter Alpha 3*), this ain't gonna cut it. *Taiketsu*'s characters are large and well-animated, but their moves lack variety, and the unforgiving controls make it needlessly difficult to put together effective combos.

On the plus side, *Taiketsu* offers a host of unlockable extras, including artwork, character bios, music, and a couple of bonus modes, but again, if you're not big into *DBZ*, most of this will seem frivolous at best. Bottom line: Unless you're of the Saiyan underwear-wearing variety, you'll probably want to pass.

CB: Even if you love *DBZ* so much that you and your friends gear each other by character names, do yourself a favor and avoid this game. It'll bring nothing but disappointment. The first inkling that something's wrong is in the pseudorendered graphics. Something about them just doesn't look right, and everything moves slowly and stiffly. And the gameplay is just as unbalanced. It's a button masher, pure and simple, with very little skill necessary. Sure, the unlockable rewards are fairly cool, but only the most patient *DBZ* faithful will suffer through it for that long.

JOHN D: You don't publish a game like this to recruit new *Dragon Ball Z* fans. You sell it to the huge base of existing scalytes who will buy it before they can even look up what the hell a Taiketsu is. So I'm not surprised that gameplay here shows no effort whatsoever. Understated punch-and-kick flurries make up most of it, but even Capcom vs. *SNK*-style charge-up abilities suck BallZ.

The developers did faithfully re-create some of that awesome *DBZ* action for the fans: Once, my opponent and I threw the same exact fireball, then jumped into the stratosphere and had simultaneous seizures. His must have been more violent, because he lost some health on the play... What a world.



■ Goku and Krillin settle their differences the only way they know how: fireballs.

THE VERDICT
OUT OF 10

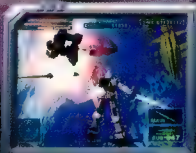
5.5 4.0 3.0

JOHN R. CJ JON D.

Publisher: Atari
Developer: Webfoot Technologies
Players: 1 (2 w/ Link cable)
ESRB: Teen

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on **CARTOON
NETWORK**

PlayStation 2



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GBA

THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT

Miniature Sims are still stimulating



■ (Left) The scooter makes it easier to get home before you have an "accident." So that's cool.



Good: Simply compelling
Bad: No Simlish?
If You Dream You're a Sim: Take a break



PAUL: In shrinking *The Sims* to fit a smaller system, EA has surprisingly shucked the simulation. Directly controlling your Sim's movements and actions means no more spontaneous lovers' spats, no more fatal cooking accidents—and if they wet their pants, it's your fault. The fascination of watching simulated people is gone, but don't worry, that of *Sims* magic remains.

This baby plays a lot like a role-playing game with *Sims* trappings, and it works brilliantly. You'll curry favor with fellow Sims by completing multipart quests, like reopening the closed-down polka club: You must get permission from the previous owner, pay of the club's taxes, and print and distribute flyers for the grand reopening. Earn money by playing simple, amusing minigames like fishing, pizza-making, and lawn-mowing. All the while, you have to keep your Sim clean, fed, well-rested, entertained, and so on.

It's sometimes difficult to track down the Sim you need in order to advance a quest, and the dialogue is maddeningly repetitive, but otherwise, *Bustin' Out* is engaging, original, and just plain fun.

SHOE: Clean this, fix that, work, mow, move, whatever—you gotta do this stuff in real life, why would you play a game about it? *Bustin' Out* is a chore to play with its never-ending list of mundane tasks to perform and computer characters to find (some of whom are never where they say they're going to be). And if you're not yawning, you're groaning over the horrible dialogue. *Bustin' Out* is still worth bustin' out, though, for kids too young to appreciate the PC or console *Sims* that mom/dad/older bro or sis are playing.

JENNIFER: Shoe must not have an addictive personality because, like its console big brother, this game's senseless monotony had me hooked. One night I literally couldn't put it down—It was cleaning this, fixing that, moving, moving, moving, and whatever...until 3 in the morning (when I had plenty of ostensibly better things to do). *The Sims* has never been about a rolling boil; it's the slow simmer that brings out all the flavor. My only real complaint here is about the iffy control in a couple of the minigames.

THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	8.0 5.0 8.0		
	PAUL	SHOE	JENNIFER

Publisher: EA Games
 Developer: EA Games
 Players: 1 (2-4 w/ Link cable)
 ESRB: Everyone
www.eagames.com



■ (Center) Each character class has its own abilities that you can level up as you see fit.

GBA

SHINING SOUL II

A bit more polish brings out the shine



■ *Soul II* has plenty of great boss fights—this squid rocks the boat, sending you sliding.

Good: Lots of items and ways to build up your character
Bad: Combat a bit repetitive
Fixed: You can save anywhere this time!



MARK: Wait a sec, didn't the first *Shining Soul* action-RPG just come out? Well, in America, yes, but in Japan the two games were separated by over a year. Much of that time was apparently spent sprucing up the visuals—*Soul II*'s dungeons are each unique and detailed, a stark contrast to the original's interchangeable caves. Character classes have gotten a bump, too, you can choose from a wide assortment of eight different types, from speedy archers to beefy warriors to spell-casting vampires. Other welcome additions include optional side-quests, story elements, and hidden areas. But at its heart—or its *Soul*, I should say—this game is a lot like the original. On the one hand, it's rewarding to choose which stats and skills to build as you gain levels, and the huge assortment of equipment and magical items makes collecting treasure fun. On the other hand, combat is simple no matter which character you play—charge, attack, retreat, repeat. Dungeon puzzles or enemies requiring different strategies could have done wonders for the gameplay. Multiplayer adds speed and some tactics to combat, so play it with friends if you can.

JOHN R: *Shining Soul II* is an awful lot like its predecessor, but with a little bit more of everything: more character classes, more levels, more items and equipment, and (unfortunately) a whole lot more pointless dialogue. Fortunately, the dungeon designs have been given a major overhaul from the first game, but combat remains as repetitive as ever, which means if you're planning to go solo, you're likely to get bored after only a few hours of play. Get some friends together, though, and you've got one seriously fun multiplayer RPG.

BRYAN: The amount of shine added to *Soul*'s sequel is...well, almost enough. This action-RPG easily surpasses its predecessor with diverse environments and a wide variety of character types. Also, I'm always a sucker for a game resembling *Phantasy Star Online*, where I can team up with buddies to conquer beasts and discover ultrarare weapons. Yet, too few identifying scrolls in the beginning of the game leaves you flat broke, and while the story is a step up from the original, this narrative could still use some work.

THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	7.5 7.0 7.0		
	MARK	JOHN R.	BRYAN

Publisher: Atlus
 Developer: Sega
 Players: 1 (2-4 w/ Link cable)
 ESRB: Everyone
www.atlus.com

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The evolution of R SPEED

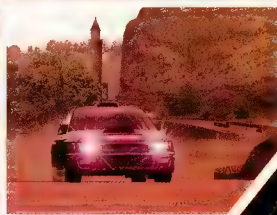
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PlayStation 2



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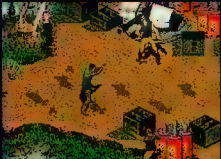


REVIEWS WRAP-UP

Not all games are created equal, yet someone, somewhere might still be curious about them

Sadly, even the Review Crew in the Ultimate Reviews Issue of *EGM* doesn't have enough room to contain the thunderous downpour of holiday releases. So, here in the Wrap-up, we give these lesser-known titles a chance to face the perils and pleasures of judgment. No scores are handed out, but you can get a brief synopsis of what to expect. Also, thanks go out to CNN's Daniel Sieberg, who graciously took time out of his busy schedule to cover a few games.

007: Everything or Nothing



GBA • EA Games • ESRB: Teen — I would definitely approve of the GBA, and the latest Bond titles for the covert gaming device will likely leave you shaken, if not stirred. The action combines stealth shooting with *Spy Hunter*-esque driving scenes, complete with rousing 007 music. But the graphics feel like they've lost their mojo. Oh wait, wrong movie. —Daniel Sieberg

Arx Fatalis



XB • DreamCatcher • ESRB: Mature — An Xbox port of an acclaimed PC dungeon-crawler, *Arx Fatalis* (no, we can't pronounce it either) has you plumbing the depths of a subterranean world that's more atmospheric and interactive than most RPG dungeons. It's certainly a more concentrated dose of spelunkin' fun than the free-form *Morrowind*.

Cabela's Dangerous Hunt

PS2, XB • Activision • ESRB: Teen — Tired of killing defenseless animals? Now you can stalk bears and wolves! Following tracks and staying downwind may sound brainy, but the game has awful graphics and painfully touchy controls. Then again, the Wal-Mart crowd might not notice.

Dinosaur Hunting



XB • Metro 3D • ESRB: Teen — That's right, you're hunting fearsome prehistoric beasts...with tranquilizer darts. Which you tediously mix yourself, using info gleaned from examining Dino feces. No lie.

Grand Theft Auto Double Pack

PS2 • Rockstar • ESRB: Mature — If you're one of the few remaining PlayStation 2 owners who hasn't already picked up *GTA3* and *Vice City*, now you can get them both for a criminally low price—\$40. Don't expect any enhancements, though. You'll have to apprehend the Xbox version (which we'll review next issue) if you're lookin' for graphical tweaks and custom soundtracks.

Freestyle Street Soccer



XB • Acclaim • ESRB: Teen — Strikers pop-lookin' on inner city streets? Either the International Football Association's attempting to make soccer appealing in the States or Acclaim's trying to scoop EA Big's inevitable *FIFA Street*. But better than that *Ghetto Chess*, and the gameplay's passable for soccer nonpurists.

Fugitive Hunter



PS2 • Encore • ESRB: Mature — Without the help of Harvard mathematicians specializing in negative exponents, we couldn't score *Fugitive Hunter* fairly.

This shooter is so embarrassingly bad you must buy it. If only to box Osama Bin Laden in his Afghan hideout as some dude raps, "Bin Laden, I'm coming for you, cap your ass on the PS2." (We're not kidding.)

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone



PS2, XB, GC • EA Games • ESRB: Everyone — EA didn't have a next-gen game ready back when the first *Potter* flick debuted two years back, so it makes up for it with this budget-priced adventure. The gameplay and graphics are easily comparable with last fall's *Chamber of Secrets* game, so muggles and wizards alike will surely dig it.

Looney Tunes Back in Action



XB • Acclaim • ESRB: Everyone — Even Bugs and Daffy seem bored in this dullsville action-adventure from developer Warthog (*Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter*).

Medal of Honor: Infiltrator



GBA • EA Games • ESRB: Teen — Intense gameplay and surprising realism make this pocket-sized *Honor* a must-have for fans of the wartime genre. Gone is the first-person angle of console games, replaced by nice-looking, old-school overhead visuals. EA even managed to squeeze in some historic film footage to help set the tone. Overall, one of the best GBA shooters around. —Daniel Sieberg



■ This *Fugitive Hunter* promo image clearly shows the game's Osama-killing goal.

MTV Celebrity Deathmatch



PS2, XN, GC • Gotham Games • ESRB: Mature — Adapted from what was once a hit TV show, this game challenges you to pick a "celebrity" like Carmen Electra and duke it out with, say, her ex, Dennis Rodman. You can use weapons like chainsaws and crossbows, or get crazy with special powers, like Justin Timberlake's musical fruit assault. Fundamentally, the game is pure garbage, yet it's vaguely enjoyable in a guilty pleasure sort of way. —Daniel Sieberg

Super Trucks Racing



PS2 • XS Games • ESRB: Everyone — Talk about your niche product. Truck racing is sort of big with the European mullet contingent, apparently, and *Super Trucks Racing* is aimed at the three of you who have always dreamed of a truck-racing game. It's just \$15, but too bad it doesn't look much better than a Nintendo 64 title.

Tokyo Xtreme Racer 3



PS2 • Crave • ESRB: Everyone — The game about driving around Tokyo's freeway system returns. Though you can now visit Nagoya and Osaka, little else has changed. It's a poor racing game with outdated visuals and a low price—\$20. 🐻

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- GameSpy



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EGM's guide to the greatest (and lamest) games

CHEAP THRILLS
10 NIFTY GAMES THAT
COST NEXT TO NOTHING

**VIRTUAL FIGHTER 4
EVOLUTION**

LEARN TO FLY

WARRIOR LIGHT DRIFT 2

LEEK AND DESTROY

PLAYSTATION 2

GAME	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Jack Part 1: Infection	■ Banda's epic, anime-flavored RPG opens with style	6.0 7.5 7.5	
Jack Part 2: Mutation	■ Continuing your endless RPG bender, Part 2 is more of the same	6.5 6.0 8.0	
Jack Part 3: Outbreak	■ A third dose of nearly ceaseless roleplaying	6.5 6.0 8.0	
4x4 Evolution	■ Big-ass wheels. Dirt-encrusted rims. Medford off-roading	6.0 -- --	
Ace Combat 4: Shattered Skies	■ The venerable, vomit-inducing flight sim returns. Surf bag sold separately	7.0 7.5 7.0	
Adventures of Cookie & Cream	■ Zany, Japanese-branded multiplayer mania. Ward but fun	7.5 -- --	
Aero Elite	■ Jet into the danger zone with Sega's Ace Combat killer—or so it thought	7.0 -- --	
Aggressive Inline	■ The Hawkster of roller blading. Without the ego	8.0 8.5 8.5	Silver
Airblade	■ Crappy hoverboard thrills that'll make you want to watch back to the Future again	3.5 4.0 4.5	
All-Star Baseball 2002	■ Fun to play as old-timers like Reggie Jackson and Nolan Ryan. If only you could stuff the ball	4.0 6.5 6.5	
Aliens Versus Predator: Extinction	■ Real-time strategy for sci-fi movie-sequel lovers. Note: Better than Alien: Resurrection flick	6.5 6.0 6.5	
After Echo	■ Time-manipulating antics abound in this eclectic take on action gaming	6.5 6.5 4.0	
Amplitude	■ Pop-tastic tunes—from Garbage to Bowie—fuel this music-making riff	7.5 8.0 7.0	
Ape Escape 2	■ Monkeys are, in general, cool. This primate-interested sequel is, too	7.5 6.0 8.5	
Aqua Aqua	■ A quirky yet irritating puzzler, rife with very personable droplets of water	6.0 -- --	
Arx the Lad: Twilight of the Spirits	■ Next-gen graphics and a revamped battle system make this a semiworthy sequel	6.5 7.0 8.0	
Arctic Thunder	■ Frost-bitten, freezer-burned snowmobile racing druck	3.0 2.0 3.0	
Armored Core 2	■ Hammering together a custom mech and sending it off to battle isn't fun for everyone	6.0 6.0 5.5	
Armored Core 2: Another Age	■ Three times more missions, two dozen new weapons, and a countless supply of modularity	6.5 4.5 4.0	
Armored Core 3	■ As fine as mech combat comes on PS2, although it could be better	7.5 -- --	
Army Men: Air Attack 2	■ Those darned green plastic soldiers take to the air—again	7.0 -- --	
Army Men: Green Rogue	■ Bad franchise + old-school side-scrolling = a steaming plastic piece of poo	2.0 2.0 2.0	
Army Men: Sarge's Heroes II	■ Sarge's crew makes a not-so-welcome return to the battlefield	4.0 5.0 6.5	
Army Men: RTS	■ Those stupid lily run rampart in this halfway-slick real-time strategy episode	7.0 7.0 5.5	
ATV Offroad Fury	■ Four-wheeler'n, dirt-spinner'n, off-road'n' glory. Wear a helmet, please	8.5 8.5 9.0	Silver
ATV Offroad Fury 2	■ Solid sequel to the original masterpiece of off-road goodness	8.5 7.0 7.5	
Auto Modellista	■ Horrendous handling sends this slick cartoon-shaded racer into the guardrail	5.0 7.0 5.5	
Backyard Wrestling: Don't Try This at Home	■ Either you like cacti in the face or not. This brawler isn't for everyone	8.0 2.0 7.0	
Badminton: Dark Alliance	■ D&Q action without all the long-winded exposition. Geeks still welcome, though	8.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
Barbarian	■ Pit this primitive fighter against Governor Schwarzenegger for real entertainment	4.0 -- --	
Batman Vengeance	■ The Caped Crusader can't seem to batavang his way out of mediocrity	6.0 6.5 5.0	
Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu	■ So damn hard, even the Dark Knight is complaining	4.0 7.0 5.5	
Beyond Good & Evil	■ Platforming perfection from the man responsible for Rayman	8.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
Big Mutha Truckers	■ Trailer-park trash driving 18-wheelers. What went wrong? Sounds like pure gold	7.0 6.0 4.5	
Black & Bruised	■ Think Knockout Kings injected with cartoon craziness. And general badness	5.5 3.5 7.5	
Blood Omen 2	■ Baddass vampire Kain returns in this lush, lively bloodsucking romp	7.0 7.0 7.5	
BloodRayne	■ Why complain when a sexy bloodcutter nibbles on the necks of Nazi thugs?	7.5 7.5 7.0	
Bloody Roar 3	■ Like a playable, fiddler version of Animate's. Third-grade reading level not required	5.0 6.0 6.0	
Bloody Roar 4	■ More of the same human-to-beast transformation brawling. Ack! Hairball	3.5 3.5 4.0	
Bombastic	■ An out-of-nowhere puzzler starting truckloads of exploding dice. Addictive, for sure	8.0 7.5 8.5	Silver
The Bouncer	■ Square's awkward branch off into Final Fight territory. Dismas: 90%. Gameplay: 10%	7.0 6.0 6.0	
Breach of Fire: Dragon Quarter	■ Some cartoon shading helps to revitalize this fifth installment in the series	8.0 8.0 8.0	
Buffy's Dance Beat	■ "Oops... I did it again!" doesn't even begin to describe the beat-infected horror	3.5 1.5 3.5	
Burnout: The Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds	■ The slayer's second stab at next-gen gamehood bleeds more than expected	6.5 4.5 7.5	
Burnout	■ For the traffic-clogging, road-raging maniac in all of us. Seat belt not included	7.5 7.5 6.0	
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	■ For the traffic-clogging, road-raging maniac in all of us. Seat belt not included	8.5 7.5 8.5	Silver
Capcom vs. SNK 2	■ 44 base-knowledge brawlers from the Capcom/SNK libraries toss off in this rattling fighter	6.0 7.5 8.0	Silver
CART Fury	■ A high-speed arcade racer for those who love the smell of burning rubber	6.0 6.0 6.5	
Castles: Lament of Innocence	■ Wampires are immortal. So is this fog-rutting franchise. Even with the knicks	7.5 6.0 7.5	
Cass Legion	■ A no-holds-barred, massive beat-'em-up based on a line of Japanese fantasy novels	6.5 6.5 6.5	
Choginiger: Crisis Shield	■ Closest you'll come to actual helicopter training. Hey, it beats joining the Coast Guard	7.0 5.5 5.5	
City Crisis	■ Rockstar's ill-fated action sector game. Not like Grand Theft Auto III. At all	6.5 -- --	
Clock Tower 3	■ Survival horror without guns, knives, or cameras. Not so scary as one may think	6.0 7.5 6.5	
Conflict: Desert Storm II—Back to Baghdad	■ Back to Baghdad? Couldn't the general have picked a more ritzier resort town?	4.0 5.5 6.0	
Contra: Shattered Soldier	■ An onslaught of side-scrolling excellence with some 3D flair	9.0 9.0 9.0	Silver
Cool Boarders 2001	■ Shredding snow has never been so... uncool	3.5 6.0 4.0	
Crash Bandicoot: The Wrath of Cortex	■ Detached from creator Naughty Dog, Crash becomes reckless	4.0 6.0 4.5	
Crazy Taxi	■ A basic port of the Dreamcast romp that's still a slick ride	8.0 -- --	Silver
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon	■ Great kung-fu flick. The game is the exact opposite	4.0 5.0 3.0	
Dance Dance Revolution: DDMAX	■ Mad toe tapping for the arcade fanatic	8.5 -- --	Silver
Dark Cloud	■ Even dark clouds have a silver lining, as proven by this epic RPG offering	8.0 9.0 8.0	Silver
Dark Cloud 2	■ A classy RPG cocktail founded on a "build your own world" principle	8.0 8.0 9.5	Silver
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	■ Mirra once again proves that he doesn't need training wheels	8.0 8.5 8.5	Silver
DDRMX2	■ A rhythm-crazy saga for those without an endless roll of quarters	6.5 7.5 9.0	
Dead or Alive 2: Hardcore	■ Beautiful babes kicking ass and taking names. Sounds good. Plays even better	9.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
Dead to Rights	■ A Max Payne wannabe with a twitchy trigger finger	6.5 5.0 5.0	

4,009 Games the Review Crew has seen from the days of the Atari 7800 to the current systems.

PLAYSTATION 2


GAME	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Def Jam: Fight for NY	■ Wrestling crossed with hip-hop. Who woulda thunk that would click? It did	7.5 7.0 8.5	
Defender	■ Another so-so vintage coin-op gone next-gen	6.5 -- --	
Deus Ex: The Conspiracy	■ A first-person shooter with paranoia and psychological intrigue. Yummy	8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
Devil May Cry	■ You've never looked so cool with guns blazing and sword slashes!	9.0 9.0 8.5	Silver
Devil May Cry 2	■ Doesn't live up to the original's genius, but Dante is still a dandy, trigger-happy hero	7.0 7.0 8.0	
Dino Stalker	■ Yet another half-assed light-gun adventure. Oh well	5.5 -- --	
Disaster Report	■ This just-in: Natural disasters go interactive. Not as fun as it sounds. Full story at 11	6.0 6.5 4.0	
Diogenes: Hour of Darkness	■ A nicely polished tactical RPG set in the homey, humble-sounding Netherworld	8.0 8.5 7.5	Silver
Disney's Treasure Planet	■ Kidlike fare that heaps only a small reward for willing players	5.0 6.5 7.0	
Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers	■ The classic Disney duck tries out platforming and learns he can't jump very high	6.5 -- --	
Downforce	■ You saw that Sly Stallone movie, Orville? This game is much better than that	7.0 -- --	
Downhill Domination	■ Believe it or not, mountain biking translates well into the interactive realm	8.0 7.0 8.5	
Dr. Muto	■ A floppy attempt by Midway to create a new action-adventure icon	4.0 -- --	
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai	■ Based on the megapopular anime series, this browser packs a wallop	8.0 7.0 7.5	
Drakan: The Ancients' Gate	■ Next time you think about settling up on a dragon and flying around...don't	3.5 5.0 5.5	
Driving Emotion Type-S	■ Square's shy attempt to take its RPG skills to the race track. Ooops	6.0 6.0 5.0	
Duquitch: United Peace Force	■ A military action sim that could use an injection of nuclear ozzle	6.0 5.0 6.5	
Dual Hearts	■ Quest through land, sea, and air to visit mystic dream lands. Passport optional	7.5 -- --	
Dynasty Tactics 2	■ Kon's spin-off strategy series strikes a positive cord for genre geeks	7.5 7.5 7.5	
Dynasty Warriors 2	■ Koel's long-standing franchise helped define the phrase "hack and slash"	6.5 7.0 6.0	
Dynasty Warriors 3	■ A more polished sequel than the last installment in the one-versus-many actioner line	6.0 7.0 8.0	
Dynasty Warriors 3: Xtreme Legends	■ An entirely unnecessary milking of a perfectly decent franchise	6.5 -- --	
Dynasty Warriors 4	■ Profiler and bloodier exploitation of the "kill everyone on the battlefield" formula	7.5 6.5 7.0	
Ecco the Dolphin: Defender of the Future	■ Fluffy fun for the ocean's wayward inlander (Captain Planet fans need not apply)	7.5 -- --	
Enter the Matrix	■ A perfect example of silver-screen screeny gone horribly wrong...in slow motion	3.5 3.5 6.0	
Escape from Monkey Island	■ A classic, wily pirate adventure fueled by—get this—harry jokes	8.0 -- --	
ESPN International Track & Field	■ Boredom quickly sets in after tons of button mashing	6.5 5.0 3.5	Gold
ESPN International Winter Sports 2002	■ Like Track & Field, but with snow	6.0 -- --	
ESPN MLS Extra Time	■ Rigid control hides back the Winning Eleven maker's disappointing MLS title	4.5 4.0 5.5	
ESPN National Hockey Night	■ Rates near the top of all-time-sport titles	1.5 3.0 4.0	
ESPN NBA 2Night	■ ESPN license is cool, but unfortunately the game is lamer than the NBA	4.0 -- --	
ESPN NBA Basketball	■ Perfect pace and better animations make you want to start a season right this second	8.0 9.0 8.5	Gold
ESPN NFL Football	■ Good control and fun online play, but first-person football is kind of weird	7.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
ESPN NHL Hockey	■ The same great game as last season (NHL 2K), now has better TV-like presentation	8.5 9.0 9.0	Silver
ESPN Winter X-Games Snowboarding	■ It's not SSC, but it's still pretty fun	7.5 7.5 7.0	
ESPN Winter X-Games Snowboarding 2002	■ Great Career mode, but so realistic that it actually detracts from the fun	6.0 -- --	
ESPN X-Games Skateboarding	■ This Tony Hawk knockoff has a decent soundtrack but is noticeably devoid of extra features	7.0 7.0 4.0	
Eternal Ring	■ Released during PS2's launch, this "magical" RPG merely held game boards over	2.5 6.0 7.0	
Evie of Extinction	■ A once-promising action game that quickly turned into a lifeless farce	4.0 6.0 4.0	
EverQuest 2	■ From a maker of badass fighting games comes underwilder exploration. Neat!	6.5 -- --	
Evergrace	■ Hardy "ever graceful" as the title implies, this is average RPG fluff	7.5 6.5 5.5	
EverQuest Online Adventures	■ Evercast steps from PC to PS2 with passable results. And lots of walking	7.5 6.0 6.0	
Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick	■ Don't be a primitive screwhead! Avoid this unbelievably dull beat-'em-up	2.0 2.0 2.0	
Extermination	■ An exercise in genre exploitation, riding on the coattails of Resident Evil's popularity	6.5 6.0 4.5	
Extreme-G 3	■ Surf-busting future racing that isn't quite fast enough to earn the pole position	6.5 6.0 6.0	
F1 2002	■ Fresh F1 action from the front lines of the race-car sport	8.5 -- --	Silver
F1 Championship Season 2001	■ Merely a so-so digitization of the F1 rush	6.5 7.0 5.5	
F1 Racing Championship	■ Expertly captures the burry-eyed briskness of stadium-based racing	8.5 8.0 7.5	Silver
Fantavision	■ The Fourth of July music holiday injuries and half the fun	5.0 -- --	
Fatal Frame	■ Survival-horror with a snopshot twist. And Japanese schoolgirl treads	6.5 8.0 7.0	
FIFA 2001	■ Fun game, realistic simulation, and David Beckham with a conservative do	9.0 8.0 9.5	Silver
FIFA World Cup 2002	■ A tweaked game engine and new ball-juggling capabilities can't save this two-mode sim	6.5 -- --	
FIFA Soccer 2004	■ Exponentially better animations and off-the-ball control bring FIFA closer to Winning Eleven	7.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
Final Fantasy	■ In a world devastated by an evil called Sin, this FF installment is anything but that	9.0 9.5 9.5	Gold
Fire Blade	■ A piss-poor arcade chopper rip, starting a terrorist-annihilating attack hawk	4.0 -- --	
Forever Kingdom	■ An underdog RPG about three members of an unlikely team. Baiting, you know, evil	6.5 -- --	
Freedom Fighters	■ Easily accessible team-based combat. Like a playable <i>Act Dawn</i> —minus Patrick Swayze	8.5 7.5 8.0	Silver
Freestyle	■ The Bill Bix formula applied to motocross with the utmost precision	8.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
Freestyle Metal X	■ A poor man's <i>Freestyle</i> for the motocross dope	5.0 4.5 5.0	
Frequency	■ A nifty music-creation romp. Like your iPod, but with a controller	6.5 7.0 7.0	
Fur Fighters: Viggio's Revenge	■ A sorry Dreamcast port of a fluffy, funny action-shooter	6.0 -- --	
Futurama	■ A floppy game based on a failing—rather, failed—animated series	6.0 4.5 5.0	
Galerians: Ash	■ An attempt at sci-fi horror that misses most of the beats on the tension meter	5.5 5.0 5.5	
Gallop Racer 2001	■ Those who thought horse racing couldn't be enthralling, thought too soon	7.5 -- --	
Gauntlet: Dark Legacy	■ Gauntlet gone 3D. Not so good. Not too bad. Period	5.5 7.0 6.0	
The Gateway	■ Like Guy Ritchie's answer to <i>Grand Theft Auto</i> , Those darn Brits also say "look," a lot	6.0 7.5 8.0	

CHEAP THRILLS

ALL-STAR SLAMMERS' BALL

Slammers' Ball: PS2 / Xbox / GC / PC


- Promising as a classic, this baseball game needs a little more oomph to be the real deal.



THE DYING

The Dying: PS2 / Xbox / GC / PC


- This zombie-themed action-adventure game is a solid effort, but it lacks the punch of a true action-adventure.



STANLEY & MITCH

Stanley & Mitch: PS2 / Xbox / GC / PC

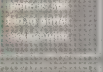
- This game is a solid effort, but it lacks the punch of a true action-adventure.



PETER COOL

Peter Cool: PS2 / Xbox / GC / PC


- This game is a solid effort, but it lacks the punch of a true action-adventure.



KICKBOXING

Kickboxing: PS2 / Xbox / GC / PC


- This game is a solid effort, but it lacks the punch of a true action-adventure.



SUPERSTAR DANCE CLUB

Superstar Dance Club: PS2 / Xbox / GC / PC

- This game is a solid effort, but it lacks the punch of a true action-adventure.



TOP 5 PLAYSTATION REVIEW SCORES



1. METAL GEAR SOLID
10, 10, 10, 10 = Platinum



2. GRAN TURISMO 2
10, 10, 10, 10 = Platinum



3. TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2
10, 10, 10 = Platinum



4. TEKKEN 3
10, 10, 10, 9.0 = Gold



5. FINAL FANTASY VII
9.5, 9.5, 9.5, 9.5 = Gold

PLAYSTATION 2

GAME	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Gitaroo Man	■ Colorful, quirky, all-out Japanese zanyness in the form of an unconventional rhythm romp	7.0 6.0 7.5	
Gladus	■ Depending on your level of fondness, this might be your kind of RPG	8.5 7.0 6.0	
Global Touring Challenge Africa	■ The dusty, dirty aspect of rally racing in Africa. Just watch the Discovery Channel	6.0 -- --	
Gradus III & IV	■ Two shooters for the price of one. But don't expect too much gusto	7.5 7.0 3.0	
Gran Turismo 3 A-spec	■ The grandiosity of racing sims. Need we say more?	10 10 10	Platinum
Grand Theft Auto III	■ The "go anywhere, do anything" trend started here. So did the hooker shortage	9.0 9.0 10	Gold
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	■ Applying the '80s to the historic organized-crime franchise. May ex-cite	10 10 10	Platinum
Grandia II	■ Mightily, spiky-haired Rudo headlines this damn good epic	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Grandia Xtreme	■ The RPG franchise shifts gears. And the transmission bottoms out. Oops	7.5 7.0 6.5	
The Great Escape	■ Steve McQueen is honored for a remake of his classic prison flick. What's that smell?	4.0 4.5 6.5	
GUILTY Gear X	■ Skillfully animated 2D brawling from yesteryear. A mad recent re-visit	7.0 7.5 7.0	
GUILTY Gear X2	■ Even more polished 2D slickness emerges from this wild installment in the series	8.0 8.5 8.5	Silver
Gungrave	■ Stylish, hard-nosed shooting. And explosions. And more shooting	6.0 8.0 6.5	
Gungrave Blaze	■ Postapocalyptic tag-action affair. As if there were any other kind	7.0 6.5 7.0	
Half-Life	■ The PC's premier first-person shooter finds a home on the console after three years	8.0 8.5 8.0	Silver
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	■ Here to make your Harry Potter withdrawal go away. Impressive movie-to-game riff	7.5 -- --	
Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup	■ The most game-worthy portion of the Potter flicks makes a sporty debut	6.5 7.5 7.5	
Harvest Moon: Save the Homeland	■ A robust new direction for the original series. Like "life simulation." But not your life	8.0 -- --	Silver
Harvest: Call of the King	■ Blends nearly every genre—platformer, shooter, FPS, racer—fairly well	7.0 -- --	
Headhunter	■ Play as a bounty hunter extraordinaire who misses his target a lot too many times	6.5 6.5 7.0	
Henry Jerdy	■ Brilliant animation is superceded by lackluster herding mechanic. D'oh!	6.5 6.0 3.0	
High Heat Major League Baseball 2002	■ The game baseball fans have long been waiting for	7.0 6.5 8.0	
High Heat Major League Baseball 2003	■ Better graphics, more features—300 expands on an already great game	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
High Heat Major League Baseball 2004	■ Best player/batter interface ever in a videogame. 2-on-2 Showdown made in great fun	9.0 -- --	Gold
Hinton 3	■ First-to-win checkings, head shots, and stabbers are all in a day's work for this pro	9.0 -- --	Gold
Hit the Green in This Pick-up-and-Play Sim	■ No stuffy, plaid-pants fogies here	8.5 8.5 9.0	Gold
The Hulk	■ Hulk smash! Hulk snap! Ang Lee's neck! Hulk like game better!	6.5 6.5 7.5	
Hunter: The Reckoning—Wayward	■ Proving that shallow arcade action doesn't always appear the corpse junkie	6.0 6.0 5.0	
I-Ninja	■ Gary Coleman takes advice, this 11 rings slices and dices with the best of 'em... Just lower	8.0 6.0 6.5	
Ice	■ Strikingly beautiful graphics, deft gameplay, and a princess who gets in your way a lot	8.0 8.0 8.0	
Jake and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy	■ The linear crafted sequel to 1999's original PS1 RPG	7.0 6.0 8.0	
Jaki II	■ Post-Banquet Naughty Dog takes to the budding action-platforming genre	8.5 8.5 7.5	Silver
Jaki II	■ Darker, denser, edgier, and all around bigger, this sequel has major "lud"	8.5 7.5 8.5	Silver
Jet X20	■ Remember Denise Richards' scalded babe Christmas Jones? This game is dumber	5.0 4.0 6.5	
Jet X20	■ Sony flips the bird to the Splatoondown series with this in-house Sno-Doo racer	8.5 -- --	Silver
Jenny Holmley Mad Tits	■ It's amazing Holmley got work after this snow-job sludge hit shelves	3.5 2.5 2.5	
K-1 World Grand Prix	■ Ingorious boxing from Japan. With kicking. And allow. And real pain	6.0 8.0 4.5	
Karaoke Revolution	■ A party-hat-happy weekend is guaranteed when you sing without regard for your ego	8.5 8.5 7.5	Silver
Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer	■ Not half bad. Slater conveys monster ocean waves in the extreme-surfing sim	6.5 -- --	
King: Master of Bushido	■ On-to-incredibly average sword-slammer action. Master of nothing, really	5.5 5.0 7.0	
Kessen	■ Feudal conflict simulation from the one-versus-many experts. Loo	7.5 -- --	
Kessen II	■ Have an urge for more ancient military clashes re-created? Your remedy is right here	7.0 -- --	
kill.switch	■ Urban warfare with rilly on about the corner. Fine. Like the glitter scores in Black Hawk Down	6.0 6.5 7.5	
King of Fighters 06	■ Intrudes don't buy games. Sega made this 18-wheeler racer anyway. And it's...OK	6.0 -- --	
Kingdom Hearts	■ Square teamed with Uncle Walt's kingdom of characters. A smashing comb, indeed	8.5 8.5 8.5	Silver
Klonoa 2: Lunella's Vell	■ Age-old platforming crossed with new-age visuals. And aren't Klonoa's ears mighty big?	7.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
Knockout Kings 2001	■ Installed with the hardest hits to the head since Mike Tyson's Punch-Out! (NES)	6.5 7.5 7.0	
Le Mans 24 Hours	■ France's fatique-drenched racing marathon converted to photo-real graphics	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver 2	■ Ahh, how cute. Soul-sucking Azriel is shifting dimensions again	5.5 6.0 6.5	
Legala 2: Dual Sage	■ A crafty battle system doesn't do much for this so-so RPG	6.0 -- --	
Legends of Wrestling	■ An iffy exercise in wrestling, featuring Randy Savage before he had a rap record	5.0 7.0 6.0	
Legion: The Legend of Excalibur	■ King Arthur's legend is hard to forget. But this medieval tale of a game isn't	6.0 4.5 3.5	
Lethal Skies	■ Sammy's sorry attempt to crip the mighty wings of Ace Combat and Aero Elite	3.0 4.5 4.0	
Lethal Skies II	■ A sequel lit a light sim that never took off in the first place	3.0 5.5 4.0	
The Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring	■ Rushed, poorly incubated RPG buff based on Tolkien's novel. Not the movie	2.5 6.0 7.0	
The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King	■ Polished, wholly entrancing action-adventure excellence based on the movie	8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	■ Another brilliant stab at translating the epic action of the silver screen onto your television	8.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
Mad Maestro	■ Zippy rhythm fun from the Land of the Rising Sun	7.0 -- --	
Magic Pengel: The Quest for Color	■ Doodle and fight. It's like Pokémon with digital crayons. And penia monsters	8.0 7.5 7.5	
The Mark of Kri	■ If Walt Disney made R-rated cartoons. That were interactive. And didn't have songs	9.0 8.5 8.0	Silver
Max Hoffman's Pro BMX 2	■ Hoffman isn't the Hawkster, but the BMX ticks are still top-notch in the genre	6.5 8.5 7.5	
Max Payne	■ Hard-boiled action so gritty that you'll scrub the pulp off for days	7.5 -- --	
Maximo: Ghosts to Glory	■ Capcom's other horror franchise achieves 3D greatness. In heart-pattered bowers	9.0 8.5 8.0	Silver
MDX: 2 Armageddon	■ An often overlooked sequel to a fast-paced, explosion-heavy action game	8.5 7.5 7.0	
Medal of Honor: Frontline	■ The bloodiest bits of Saving Private Ryan gone interactive. Minus Tom Hanks	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Mega Man X7	■ Yet another spoiled-on-arrival Bait Bomb adventure. The 3D doesn't help	6.0 7.0 4.0	

HAT TRICK

The Atari 7800 hockey game is EGM's first-ever review.

PLAYSTATION 2

NAME	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Men in Black II: Alien Escape	■ Alien squashing that sold more for its blockbuster name than bug-busting thrills	4.5 8.0 6.5	
Metal Arms: A Glitch in the System	■ Shockingly sweet whoop-ass robot mayhem. No glitches here	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Metal Gear Solid 2	■ Solid Snake takes it to 11 with this sensational sequel. We'd expect no less	9.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
Metal Gear Solid II: Substance	■ Hardly a true sequel, but impressive nonetheless. Solid, to say the least	9.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
Midnight Club	■ For bringing street racing into the spotlight, it was slick at the time	9.0 8.5 7.0	Silver
Midnight Club II	■ Faster, wicker, and all-around cooler. And nitrous soaked. With spinning rims	9.0 8.5 9.5	Silver
Mike Tyson Heavyweight Boxing	■ Just bite your own ear off. It's better than enduring this sissy-punch-thriving stodge	4.5 1.5 3.5	
Minority Report	■ Just another movie properly turned mediocre game. With no Tom Cruise	5.5 6.0 6.5	
MLB Slugfest 20-03	■ Like hardball with soft pitches. And unlike hardball, it's fast and fun	7.0 7.5 7.0	
MLB Slugfest 20-04	■ On par with last season's so-so ballpark antics. Just buy your crackerjacks at the grocery	6.5 8.0 7.0	
Mobile Suit Gundam: Federation vs. Zeon	■ Giant robot action that'll make the average Joe smile and the anime fan faint	8.0 -- --	Silver
Mobile Suit Gundam: Journey to Jaburo	■ Giant robot action that'll make the average Joe puke and the anime fan convulse	4.0 -- --	
Mobile Suit Gundam: Zeonic Front	■ Giant robot action that'll at least tear you away from that Dragon Ball Z marathon	5.0 7.5 6.5	
Monster Rancher 3	■ While no Pokémon, this rip-off series is still a pleasant bout	6.0 7.0 8.0	
Monsters, Inc.	■ Mike and Sulley do not endorse this lame licensed product. Neither does Boo	4.5 -- --	
Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	■ The king of blood-drenched fighters barely pounds a bruise in its 3D update	5.0 8.5 6.0	
MotoGP	■ Namco's original motorcycle burner rubs like none other	9.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
MotoGP 2	■ A two-wheeled follow-up that chokes a little on the exhaust, but still speeds by	8.0 7.0 8.0	
MotoGP 3	■ With the fuel gauge near full, this grand prix is still roaring	8.0 -- --	Silver
Mr. Mosquito	■ Forget about vampires. Mosquitoes are cooler. Or are this bloodsucker says	6.5 -- --	
MTV Music Generator 2.0	■ Sick of the pop-infused radio waves? Make your own music. But it will probably suck	7.5 7.5 3.0	
MVP Baseball 2003	■ EA returns to glory on the diamond with a superior pitching system	8.5 7.5 7.5	
MX Superfly Featuring Ricky Carmichael	■ Trickster cyclist action for the daredevil inclined. But Freestyle isn't jealous	7.5 -- --	
MX2002 Featuring Ricky Carmichael	■ Reintroducing Ricky Carmichael, another extreme-sports specialist with a lot of spunk	7.5 7.5 7.0	
My Street	■ If it really is your street, move immediately. Here's the number: 1-888-U-HALL-IT	4.5 -- --	
NASCAR 2001	■ Left turn after left turn after left turn. This pedestrian racer doesn't quite deliver	6.0 4.5 5.5	
NASCAR Heat 2002	■ Offers a cool first-person view and more options than its predecessor. Still loads of left turns	7.5 -- --	
NASCAR Thunder 2002	■ Wow! There are right turns in this game!	8.5 7.5 8.5	Silver
NASCAR Thunder 2003	■ Now that's in NASCAR! Gran Turismo 3-like graphics with an awesome Career mode	9.0 -- --	Gold
NASCAR Thunder 2004	■ GroupA/Alliance system introduces a more strategic approach to the greatest road-racing sim	8.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
NASCAR: Dirt to Daytona	■ It looks licensed drivers but still delivers the NASCAR goods	7.5 -- --	
NBA 2K2	■ PS2's top NBA series may inspire controversy	8.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
NBA 2K3	■ The best just got better with stronger defensive A.I. and online play	8.5 9.0 9.5	Gold
NBA Hoops	■ Battered basketball 3-on-3 arcade-style action based on the NBA Jam series	7.5 -- --	
NBA Jam	■ The new Jam borrows a lot from NBA Street. Maybe not enough	6.0 7.0 5.0	
NBA Live 2001	■ First Live on PS2 shows potential, but not a letterly pick	5.0 7.0 8.0	
NBA Live 2002	■ Second Live is the year's most disappointing sports game	4.0 6.0 4.5	
NBA Live 2003	■ A new game engine and freestyle control make for an excellent game of b-ball	9.0 7.5 9.5	Silver
NBA Live 2004	■ A good game improves as defense catches up with the offense, plus it's more realistic	8.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
NBA Shootout 2001	■ An ordinary game highlighted by a cool intro sequence featuring the sweet sounds of Erik S	3.0 6.0 6.0	
NBA Shootout 2003	■ Holes in the gameplay and quirky graphics slow down 99's roundballer	6.0 -- --	
NBA Street	■ "What up, playa?" Captures the vibe of the street-hoops culture like no other	9.5 8.5 7.5	Silver
NBA Street Vol. 2	■ Best arcade-hoops title is even better with new moves and improved control	8.5 9.5 8.5	Silver
NCAA College Football 2K3	■ Nice Legacy mode, but Sega is running up to EA Sports for supremacy on the college gridiron	7.0 6.0 6.5	
NCAA Final Four 2001	■ College hoops? This game is more like the ninth-grade B team. It couldn't be worse	2.0 5.0 5.0	
NCAA Final Four 2002	■ We take that back. It can get worse	2.0 3.5 2.5	
NCAA Football 2002	■ Exquisitely captures the college-gridiron feel in the series' first PS2 appearance	8.5 9.0 9.0	Silver
NCAA Football 2003	■ With the wide-open college offenses, this is the year's most fun football game, college or pro	8.5 9.0 9.5	Gold
NCAA Football 2004	■ As close to perfect as a sports game can be	9.0 9.0 9.5	Gold
NCAA GameBreaker 2001	■ Has all the pageantry of a torn ADL. What's the point here?	2.0 4.0 3.0	
NCAA GameBreaker 2003	■ The Aaron Zips are more likely to win the national title than you choosing GameBreaker	3.0 -- --	
NCAA March Madness 2002	■ College basketball is all about parties and beer binges. So you can skip this game	4.5 6.0 2.5	
NCAA March Madness 2003	■ Feels suspiciously like NBA Live. On the bubble, but just makes the dance	7.5 -- --	
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit 2	■ All about velocity, the series' sixth title boasts tight controls and fun multiplayer	9.0 9.5 9.5	Gold
NFL 2K2	■ PS2 version of Sega's football hit made Madden take notice	8.0 8.5 8.0	Silver
NFL 2K3	■ Slick ESPN presentation and interactive offense, but defense is too difficult	9.5 8.0 8.0	Gold
NFL Blitz 20-02	■ An enjoyable, over-the-top football experience with few rules to follow	7.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
NFL Blitz 20-03	■ Wow, the same old Blitz. Literally, there's nothing that sets it apart from 20-02	7.0 6.5 8.0	
NFL Blitz Pro	■ Not your 'Big Brother's Blitz: 11-on-11' games with expanded playbooks after the action	7.0 6.0 7.0	
NFL BlitzDay 2001	■ We'd rather listen to Bush Limbaugh break down football!	2.0 3.0 3.0	
NFL BlitzDay 2002	■ We'd rather listen to Monday Night Football's Luis Querens break down football	2.5 3.0 --	
NFL BlitzDay 2003	■ We'd rather listen to that idiot on Sports Radio break down football	3.5 -- --	
NFL GameDay 2004	■ Wait a minute. This isn't quite the horrific attempt at football we've grown accustomed to	4.5 4.0 5.5	
NHL 2001	■ The first PS2 version has good graphics but lame fighting	9.0 9.5 10.0	Gold
NHL 2002	■ Even laser fighting, but with improved graphics and a nice Create-a-Player mode	8.5 9.0 9.0	Silver
NHL 2003	■ A fun game flawed by a lack of good camera angles	8.0 7.5 7.0	

THE SELECT 10

Here's the short but distinguished list of games that have received straight 10s from the EGM Review Crew over the years:



★ Metal Gear Solid (PS2) ▼

★ The Legend of Zelda: The Ocarina of Time (N64)

★ Soul Calibur (PS2)

★ Gran Turismo 3 (PS2) ▼



★ Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 (PS2) ▼

★ Everquest 2 (PS2)

★ Madden 2002 (PS2)



★ Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2 (PS2) ▼



GIRLS GONE WILD: FIVE GAMES THAT FEED YOUR RAGING HORMONES

EGM loves the ladies—especially the videogame variety. Check out these titles to witness our favorite female fatales in action...

DEAD OR ALIVE: EXTREME BEACH VOLLEYBALL




MB—It's a virtual volleyball set in your dream where these scantily clad beauties hit the beach for a little fun in the sun.

TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS



PS2—Sure, the game is a dig into dark, gothic, and at least a little scary as last year's over-in, but it's a real treat.

BLOODRAYN



PS2, XB, GC Like goth chicks. Hate Nazis. You'll dig this vampiric vein who slaughters Hitler's goons by the dozen.

FEAR EFFECT 2



PS2—Not a serious dose. Fans, and you paint the town red in more ways than one while starring in this graphic sapphire sci-fi tale.

METROID PRIME



GC—We never get to see what's under Samus Aran's armor. In this splendid first-person adventure, but we're pretty sure she's on some kind of space thing.

PLAYSTATION 2

GAME	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
NHL 2004	■ The all-new Dynasty mode keeps the NHL series competitive with ESPN NHL Hockey	6.5 7.0 8.5	
NHL 2K3	■ Realistic, accurate, and fun. Hoists the Cup as the year's best hockey sim	8.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
NHL FaceOff 2001	■ Features 13 NHL legends, plus the gimmicky puck-halo feature	6.0 7.5 4.5	
NHL Hitz Pro	■ Authentic 5-on-5 action mixed with Midway's adrenaline style of play makes for a fun skate	7.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
Ninja Assault	■ Ninjas. Bad. Ninjas with guns. Almost badass	6.5 6.5 7.0	
No One Lives Forever	■ Superspy thrills branded by the '60s. With a babe. And no Bond. No matter	7.0 7.0 7.0	
Okage: Shadow King	■ A Tim Burton-esque RPG without anything else very redeeming	6.5 5.5 5.5	
Oai	■ Gunplay. Hard-to-hand combat. It's hard to say anything else remotely nice	3.5 3.5 3.0	
Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny	■ A sickly executed return to feudal Japan infested by the undead. Bad demon!	7.0 9.0 7.5	
Onimusha: Warlords	■ Survival-horror with a Tokyo twist. A perfectly potent balance of action and artistry	7.5 9.0 9.0	Silver
Orphen	■ A PS2 launch RPG that nobody—even Little Orphan Annie—related to	5.0 5.5 5.0	
Pac-Man Fever	■ Mario Party without Mario. Or Luigi. Or Nintendo. Or fun. Drat!	3.0 -- --	
Pac-Man World 2	■ The pill-munching yellow guy finds himself in another above-average 3D exploit	7.5 6.5 6.5	
Pac-Man World 3	■ The rap-happy diggily dog loses his flair for rhyme	8.0 6.0 5.0	
Pirates: The Legend of Black Kat	■ This swashbuckling rft is a mixed bag. Some say pirates rock. Others hate peg legs	4.5 8.5 7.5	
Postal Runner	■ An Army Men spin-off that no one asked for. Unless you did. But we doubt it	3.0 5.0 3.5	
Pirate FC	■ Brutal arena-based fighting courtesy of Japan's third fit, well, brutality	6.5 6.0 5.5	
Primal	■ Heavy-metal rockers enter an alternate universe filled with demons. Yeah, unlike	8.0 6.5 6.5	
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time	■ A revival of the classic platformer that doesn't suck. In fact, it's damn near brilliant	9.0 9.5 8.5	Gold
Pro Racor Driver	■ Racing with story. But unlike Drivers, you won't cross your mind while playing	7.5 -- --	
Q-Ball Billiards Master	■ Local pub closer? Q-Ball is best played sober in your room's basement, anyways	6.5 -- --	
Quake III Revolution	■ Quake III was a FPS evolution on PC. This PS2 port borders on divolution	5.5 6.5 7.5	
RAD: Robot Alchemist	■ Superhero remote-controlled robots. Damn, it only says "R" Us sold those	9.0 -- --	Silver
Ratchet & Clank	■ Tons of firepower? Check. Little metal pal? Check. Realistic prowess. Indeed	9.0 8.0 9.0	Silver
Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando	■ Upgrades everything from the original for an even more explosive mix	9.0 8.5 9.5	Gold
Rayman 2: Revolution	■ The timeless wonder adaptations meet heroes with...er...limbs. Peachy!	8.5 9.0 9.0	Silver
Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	■ Wasn't it obvious, though? The lack of proper body parts was bound to bring Ray down	6.5 7.0 --	
Rayman Arena	■ Good of 'Ray and his lesser known pals play Mario Party. Incredibly	7.0 4.5 6.5	
Rayman Revenge Pro	■ High-speed racing. Miniature proportions. With limited battery life	6.5 -- --	
Ready 2 Rumble Round 2	■ Afro-deed pugilism has limited appeal. This sequel proves just that	8.0 -- --	
Real Pool	■ No, not swimming pool. Billiards, brainiac. And it's certainly not	9.0 -- --	Silver
Red Faction	■ Thank Red Faction for Go-Mud tech. Also thank it for stick FPS freights	9.0 8.5 8.5	Silver
Red Faction II	■ But only thank this sequel for more of the slightly above-average same	7.0 7.5 8.0	
Resident Evil Code: Veronica X	■ A class-creaky, crawly suspense for the undead-loving persona in bill of us	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Resident Evil: Dead Aim	■ Sloppy, libertofized light-gun action with a Resident Evil tang. An icky tang, that is	4.0 5.0 4.0	
Resident Evil: Castle Wolfenstein: NZ	■ Zombie Nazi bashing. Excellent. The absence of online play. Not so excellent	6.0 7.0 7.0	
Rez	■ Visually wild music-generation experiment. Like living inside a drum solo	7.5 7.5 8.5	
Ridge Racer V	■ An octane-cooling experience that almost whitizes by the Gran Turismo line	8.5 8.5 9.0	Gold
Ring of Red	■ A superbly unique but infinitely boring take on future-war strategy	6.5 5.5 6.5	
Rise: Global Domination	■ Board-game meets, take note: This Risk II top notch. Everyone else: Watch paint dry	6.0 8.0 6.5	
RoadKill	■ Twisted Metal meets Grand Theft Auto, and the two don't quite hit it off	5.5 5.0 5.0	
Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown	■ A taste of the old school. But why does it feel like Robin is robbing the player?	6.0 3.0 4.5	
Robotech: Battletory	■ A cartoon-shaded anime rft that'll make any fan of the series wide-eyed	8.0 -- --	Silver
Rogue Ops	■ Imagine Snake Snake in a dress. Now stop, because we're getting turned on	6.0 6.5 7.0	
RPG Maker 2	■ Don't buy D-grade RPGs. Just make your own	5.5 6.5 3.5	
RTX Red Rock	■ Aside from the ridiculous name...wait, everything is ridiculous about this Mars-set rtd	3.5 3.5 2.5	
Ragby	■ Forget about Madden. Ragby sports less pads, less ego, and a lesser review score	7.0 -- --	
Rumble Racing	■ Muscle-car insanity for those who enjoy plumping out their rides	7.5 8.5 8.5	Silver
Rune: Viking Warlord	■ Funny how the name Rune is spelled differently than "run." Get it?	4.0 -- --	
Rygar: The Legendary Adventure	■ A franchise you may have forgotten gets a next-gen facelift. Nice chestbones, Rygar	8.0 8.5 9.0	
Savage Skies	■ It's unfortunate how every bad game has a pun-worthy word in the title. Like "savage"	9.0 4.0 3.5	
Scooby-Doo! Night of 100 Frights	■ Unlike the long-running cartoon, this Scooby platformer is actually wholly enjoyable	7.0 -- --	
Sega Sports Tennis	■ Continuing Virtua Tennis' legacy, this game has balls. Yellow ones	8.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
Shadow Hearts	■ Exorcisms. Hearings. Talk about an unconventional RPG	7.0 5.0 8.0	
Shadow Man: Second Coming	■ This voodoo journey is best left in the undead	6.0 -- --	
Shadow of Destiny	■ Somewhat cliché time-traveling RPG that plays out like Murder, She Wrote for gamers	6.5 7.5 8.5	
Shawn Palmer's Pro Snowboarder	■ Morey an SSR wannabe, Palmer's extreme ride is merely second rate	5.0 6.5 7.5	
Shiners	■ "...pays"...eyes...buming...	9.0 -- --	
Shinobi	■ Antispywar ninja kicks for the Sega purist. Get katana?	7.5 7.5 7.0	
Shox	■ The EA Big factory rolls out another stunt-crazy, tickled-out romp. This time: rally racing	7.0 -- --	
Silent Hill 2	■ Things that go bump in the night. Don't snub a flashlight on them, or else	8.5 7.5 8.0	Silver
Silent Hill 3	■ Monsters running amok in a living nightmare. In a shopping mall. No, Sears is closed	8.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
Silent Line: Armored Core	■ Intense, massive mech action from Japan? Nah, couldn't be	7.0 7.0 4.5	
Silent Scope	■ Sniping without the gracy eyepiece from the arcades	7.0 6.5 7.0	
Silent Scope 2: Dark Silhouette	■ More long-range chicky chucky. But did we really need it?	6.0 -- --	
Silent Scope 3	■ Yet even more sniping. This just is: Achy trigger fingers are the new boring	5.5 -- --	

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18 Number of silver-awarded titles that were also Game of the Month.

NOT SO SUPER

You know the history. Some-neck superheroes haven't fared well in videogames. We've rated your favorites throughout the years, and we're not to say the results are mediocre at best.



▶ **Batman**
19 games reviewed
average score: 6.44



▶ **The Hulk**
4 games reviewed
average score: 6.98

▶ **Spider-Man**
16 games reviewed
average score: 6.56



▶ **Superman**
8 games reviewed
average score: 6.64

▶ **A-Man**
18 games reviewed
average score: 6.98

PLAYSTATION 2

GAME	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Silphhead: The Lost Planet	■ Did-school space shooter with a next-gen edge. Albeit best there, done that	7.0 6.0 7.0	
The Simpsons Skateboarding	■ D'oh!	7.0 5.0 3.0	
The Simpsons: Hit & Run	■ Think <i>Grand Theft Homer</i> . Without the violence. Or hookers. Just Marge	6.5 8.0 7.0	
The Sims	■ Play this. Real life is boring	8.0 9.5 8.5	Silver
Sky Gunner	■ Quirky, cool, anime-slick in-flight shooting	8.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
Sly Odyssey	■ Low-altitude flying for aspiring air devils everywhere. Including John Travolta	8.0 7.5 8.0	
SledStorm	■ Can't always win. EA Big's only real disappointment is this slush-ridden sledfest	3.5 6.0 6.0	
Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus	■ An ultracool, cartoon-shaded platformer starring the ayelet of all mammals. No, not a minotaur	8.0 7.5 8.5	Silver
Smash Cars	■ Radio-controlled stunt driving. What, did your real-life license get revoked?	7.0 5.0 6.0	
Smuggler's Run	■ Dreams ill across-the-border drug runs are finally realized. Without the jail-cell ending	6.0 8.5 6.5	
Smuggler's Run 2: Hostile Territory	■ The business of smugglers is never done. Imitation Tickle Me Elmos, anyone?	7.0 8.5 7.0	
SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs	■ Online military frays for geeks without the stomach for boot camp. Or army cafeteria food	8.0 9.5 8.5	Gold
SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs	■ Fulfilling gamers' terrorist-bashing urges. Again	8.0 9.0 8.5	Gold
Soldier of Fortune	■ Novel concept, but shooting off the limbs of the recently deceased gets old quickly	6.0 -- --	
Soul Calibur II	■ A brawler with true gusto by which all other fighters will be judged	8.0 10 10	Gold
Space Channel 5: Special Edition	■ Peculiar, yes, but Utala is a mean anchorman/dance-floor vixen. Practice your steps	6.5 6.5 6.5	
Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy	■ Who said ancient Egyptian artifacts can't run, jump, and bash baddies like Mario?	8.0 7.0 7.0	
Spider-Man	■ Even the web-slinger isn't safe from half-spun movie adaptations	6.5 6.0 6.5	
Splashdown	■ Avoid freeway gridlock and hit the local isle. It's racing without smog spewers	6.5 8.0 7.0	
Splashdown: Rides Gone Wild	■ Ditching the realism for exaggerated amusement-park antics. It's still a wet ride	8.0 8.5 8.0	Gold
Spy Hunter	■ It's not a car. The G-8155 Interceptor is a EA machine. With air conditioning	8.0 9.5 8.5	Silver
SSX	■ Ice-cold snowboarding that defined the EA Big emblem	8.0 9.0 8.0	Gold
SSX 2	■ Your lift ticket to the most expansive, sickest, trickiest extreme ride yet	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
SSX Tricky	■ Shredding gets even more intoxicating in this rush-inducing sequel	9.0 8.5 8.5	Silver
Star Trek: Voyager: Elite Force	■ Horrendous first-person action set in the <i>Star Trek</i> universe. Beam this crap back	2.0 -- --	
Star Trek: Starliner Universe	■ My space-combat simulation appealing only to the most die-hard Trekkies	3.0 3.0 3.0	
Star Wars Bounty Hunter	■ One of the most badass. Star Wars characters gets the raw deal. Sorry, Mr. Fett	6.0 7.0 6.0	
Star Wars Race Revenge	■ Superfast pod racing from master developer Rainbow. Without the "yippees"	7.5 7.0 6.0	
Star Wars Jedi Starfighter	■ The starfighter is the Jedi's cup of choice. So, surely it's good	7.5 7.5 6.0	
Star Wars Super Bombad Racing	■ Go-kar's aren't for everyone. Especially Wookieses	4.0 2.5 4.5	
Starsky & Hutch	■ Lightgun. Driving. Starsky. Hutch. In the same game? Oh my	4.0 7.0 3.5	
State of Emergency	■ The world's first riot simulator. Also the world's 7,158th overtyped game	6.5 6.0 6.5	
Stretch: Sitcherment 628	■ Without Lilo. Sitch is merely a six-armed maniac. With bad graphics	5.5 -- --	
Street Fighter EX3	■ The capillitons rendition of Capcom's blockbuster fighter. With so-called "upgrades"	6.0 6.5 7.5	
Street Knights	■ Activision's answer to NBA Street. Without the good stuff	6.5 -- --	
Stretch Panic	■ Developer Treasure's like-it-or-hate-it hack-job puzzler in which you stretch things. A bit	6.5 4.5 3.5	
Stuntman	■ Fulfill your Hollywood fantasies. Be a stuntman. Or you could just watch <i>Real TV</i>	6.5 8.5 4.0	
Sub Rebellion	■ Intense nuclear-sub action. Not to be confused with <i>Subway</i>	8.0 8.5 7.5	Silver
Suikoden III	■ Lipping the role-playing act once again in the <i>Suikoden</i> universe	7.0 -- --	
Summer Heat Beach Volleyball	■ Sandy, not-so-sunny volleyball thrills. Without DOTA's "assets"	6.5 6.5 6.0	
Summerer	■ Sketchy, flav-filled, real-time RPG action. It's a PS2 launch title. Forgive it	4.0 6.0 4.5	
Summerer 2	■ Less-flav-filled, completely rehashed, real-time RPG action. See, forgiveness is gooder	6.5 7.0 7.5	
Seper Bust-A-Move	■ Bubble-popping perks for the puzzler fanatics	7.5 -- --	
Superman: Shadow of Apokolips	■ The Man of Steel gets a cartoon-shaded makeover. Makes you forget all about that N64 crap	7.0 7.0 8.5	
Surfing H3O	■ Drowning. Yes. That's about as entertaining as this water-logged release	4.5 -- --	
SWAT: Global Strike Team	■ Arcade FPS action. Not starring Colin Farrell. Or his foul mouth	5.0 6.0 4.0	
Swing Away Golf	■ A cartoony, personality-filled golf romp. Falls in between <i>Mario Golf</i> and <i>Tiger Woods</i>	7.5 7.0 6.5	
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	■ The Turtles' comeback has us screaming "meeh" more than "cowabunga"	6.5 7.0 6.0	
Teikken 4	■ A hard-punching arcade fighter in the tradition of past Tekken offerings	7.5 6.5 7.0	
Teikken Tag Tournament	■ An excellent bloody-nose-inducing brawler for the PS2 launch crowd	8.0 7.0 8.0	
Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	■ Take three for the stealthy, almost-authentic ninja franchise	7.0 7.0 7.5	
Test Drive	■ Yet another follow-up for the <i>Test Drive</i> series, which is still horsepower rummy	8.0 7.0 4.5	
Test Drive Off-Road—Wide Open	■ When the road turns to gravel, so does the <i>Test Drive</i> template. Still plain bunny	4.0 5.5 7.5	
Theme Park Roller Coaster	■ Make your own private Six Flags. Make big money. Underpay the actors in pink hippo suits	8.0 -- --	Silver
The Thing	■ A game based on John Carpenter's classic horror flick won't frighten many	6.5 8.0 6.0	
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001	■ See Tiger puff	6.5 7.0 6.5	
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2002	■ See Tiger drive	7.0 -- --	
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	■ See Tiger get a hole in one	9.0 9.5 9.0	Gold
Time Crisis 2	■ Own those icy-finger-finger woes by playing this captivating <i>Crisis</i> for a few minutes	7.5 7.0 6.0	
Time Crisis 3	■ Without hesitation, Namco maintains the legacy of its best light-gun franchise	7.0 7.0 6.5	
TimeSplitters	■ First person shooting + time splitting = pure probe-trotting genius	8.5 7.5 9.0	Silver
TimeSplitters 2	■ A slickly devised continuation of the original time-traveling series	8.5 9.0 7.5	Silver
Tokyo Xtreme Racer Zero	■ Fast-paced law-breaking, street-racing experience	8.0 8.5 8.0	
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	■ Meet Sam Fisher. The dominate force in stealth infiltration. And covert ops. And by cooking	8.5 9.0 9.0	Silver
Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness	■ Meet Lara Croft. The bag-boobed queen of bad game design	5.0 7.0 3.0	
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	■ T Hawk holds back no tricks in this modern class of extreme expression	9.5 9.5 9.0	Gold



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2 Xbox-exclusive titles have earned Game of the Month honors (*Halo*, *World Series Baseball*!).

HISTORY BY NUMBERS

It's been 100, but you won't ever have us complaining about there's nothing better than getting hold to play games, and over the years we've reviewed thousands. Here's a breakdown of how many games we scored by each system.

System	Games Scored
Atari 2600	1,000
Atari 5200	100
Atari 7800	100
Atari Lynx	100
Atari Jaguar	100
Atari Jaguar CD	100
Atari Jaguar GX4	100
Atari Jaguar CDX	100
Atari Jaguar CDX2	100
Atari Jaguar CDX3	100
Atari Jaguar CDX4	100
Atari Jaguar CDX5	100
Atari Jaguar CDX6	100
Atari Jaguar CDX7	100
Atari Jaguar CDX8	100
Atari Jaguar CDX9	100
Atari Jaguar CDX10	100
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Atari Jaguar CDX100	100

PLAYSTATION 2

GAME	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	■ But he still saved a few starts for the third sequel. Another contemporary ace	8.0 9.0 1.0	Gold
Top Gear Dare Devil	■ A comical and somewhat hip racing adventure	6.5 6.5 6.0	
Top Gun: Combat Zones	■ Flies into the danger zone. Literally	4.5 -- --	
Tribe: Aerial Assault	■ Poorly ported online multiplayer. But there are jankpaks, if that turns you on	6.5 5.0 7.0	
Triple Play Baseball	■ EA hits a ground-rule double in its first PS2 at-bat	6.0 7.5 7.5	
Triple Play 2002	■ Doesn't make it past home plate, lit alone leave the ballpark	3.5 -- --	
Tsugunaga: Atoneament	■ An underrated roleplaying adventure featuring over a dozen playable characters	7.5 -- --	
Turok: Evolution	■ Steaming coil of prehistoric crap	3.5 4.0 5.0	
Twisted Metal: Black	■ Lean, mean, missile-armed car combat to die for. Jaws of life not included	8.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
Twisted Metal: Black Online	■ Same turbocharged deal. Just online	7.0 8.5 7.5	
UFC Throwdown	■ Life wrestling. But with real hits, real kicks, and real blood. Ouch	5.0 7.5 6.5	
Unison	■ 200 years in the future, dancing has been outlawed. There was probably a good reason	7.0 5.5 6.0	
Unlimited Saga	■ One of developer Square's lowest moments in RPG-dam. Avoid at all costs	4.0 4.0 2.0	
Unreal Tournament	■ Solid first-person action. At least it was during the PS2's launch	7.0 7.0 7.5	
Vertua Fighter 4	■ Sega's premier arcade fighter just keeps getting better	10 10 9.5	Gold
Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution	■ Though not an entirely fresh sequel, there's enough added muscle here to please anyone	10 9.5 9.0	Gold
Wakeboarding Unleashed	■ An overlooked extreme sport, sure, but still an rushworthy as the rest. Get wakin'!	8.0 7.5 9.0	Silver
Wallace & Gromit in Project Zoo	■ The claymation duo go in for some kid-friendly platforming	4.5 6.5 6.5	
War of the Monsters	■ No-holds-barred giant monster brawler. Like a Godzilla movie with generic characters	6.5 7.0 9.5	
Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior	■ Monotonous miniature power game turns monotonous first-person shooter	5.5 6.0 5.5	
Warriors of Might and Magic	■ Might? Magic? Nah, nothing could help this fantasy disaster	3.0 2.0 1.5	
The Way of the Samurai	■ Ambitious game design cut down at the knees by awful execution	7.0 -- --	
Wild Arms 3	■ Cool RPG action with a steampunk western flavor	8.0 -- --	Silver
Wipeback: Covert Operations	■ Jason-Luc and his team have three hours to take down enemy operatives. Wanna help?	8.0 8.0 6.0	
Wipeout Fusion	■ High-tech futuristic racing for lovers of techno-thumping driving tunes	8.5 9.0 8.0	Silver
Wizardry: Tale of the Forsaken Land	■ A sphere of light destroys a peaceful kingdom. Demons invade. So what?	5.0 -- --	
World Soccer: Winning Eleven 6 International	■ Take note, FIFA. Konami's edging in on the goal line	9.0 -- --	Gold
WWE SmackDown! Shut Your Mouth	■ Deep Create-a-Superstar offerings whet the appetites of pay-per-view junkies	7.5 7.5 7.0	
WWE SmackDown! Just Bring It	■ 3D WWE superstars. 60 match types. It's electrifying sporting entertainment	8.0 8.0 7.0	
X-Squad	■ The precursor to Brave Force, Freedom Fighters, and dodges of other team-based games	7.5 6.5 9	
X2: Wolverine's Revenge	■ Logan mistakes one too many times in his first next-gen starring role. Aa-crap-burn	5.5 4.0 5.5	
Xenoblade: Episode I	■ Humans abandoning Earth? Why? To play this epic intergalactic RPG, of course	6.5 8.0 8.0	
XGBA	■ Sound-barrier-busting open racing. Odd rules requires drivers to wear trunks	7.5 6.5 6.5	
XIII	■ Trendy cartoon-shading marred with first-person shooting. Not quite graphic-novel bliss	6.5 6.5 6.5	
Yakuza Caballista City Skater	■ Alien invaders are taking over New San Fran. You must stop them by skateboarding	7.5 -- --	
Yu-Gi-Oh!: The Duelists of the Roses	■ 880 monsters. Tons of game cards. Just short on a little thing called fun	4.5 4.5 6	
Zona of the Enders	■ Gorgeous mach combat courtesy of Hideki Kojima. But what's with a snafu-nosed lil' at the controls?	7.5 9.0 8.5	Silver
Zona of the Enders: The 2nd Runner	■ Once more... Jupiter and Mars are on the brink of destruction. Looks even better than the original	7.5 9.0 8.5	Silver

XBOX

GAME	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
4x4 Evolution 2	■ You wouldn't think racing a Chevy Blazer would be this bad. OK, maybe you would	3.0 5.0 5.0	
AirForce Delta Storm	■ While it is decent for an Xbox launch title, this baby never quite gets off the ground	5.5 -- --	
All-Star Baseball 2003	■ Acclaim starts to pull its once-great ball game out of the minors	7.0 -- --	
All-Star Baseball 2004	■ About as much fun as getting boned by a major league fastball	5.5 -- --	
Alter Echo	■ Yet another generic action game with some pretty special effects. Yawn	4.0 6.5 6.5	
Amped	■ Microsoft's first slope-streelin' boarding game showed a lot of promise	6.0 6.5 7.0	
Amped 2	■ The simulation-heavy sequel accentuated form and grace over extreme snowboarding	8.0 8.0 9.0	Silver
Apex	■ Aspiring Henry Forde gets to build and race their own cars	8.0 -- --	Silver
ATV Quad Power Racing 2	■ Go four-wheeler' with this surprisingly good racer. The skill competitions rock!	7.5 -- --	
Azurik: Rise of Parathia	■ They left one element out of Azurik's arsenal: fun	2.5 4.5 4.5	
Backyard Wrestling: Don't Try This At Home	■ Great fun for those of us who've learned to embrace the lowest common denominator	2.0 7.0 8.0	
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	■ Think Gauntlet, but single player, with kick-ass graphics and busy inkeepers	8.0 -- --	Silver
Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu	■ Holy mediana gameplay, Batman! At least Alhuld doesn't appear as Mr. Freeze	4.8 5.5 7.0	
Battle Engine Aquila	■ More fun with mech warfare, and our Battle Engine Tequila drinking game goes great with it	7.0 7.5 8.0	
Beyond Good & Evil	■ Extreme photorealism for the Vicky Vale in all of us	8.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
Blitz: The Time Sweeper	■ Master time and you master Blitz. It's like a big, truly VCR training program	5.5 7.5 8.0	
Blood Wake	■ Boat-combat game or great title for a Jean-Claude Van Damme film? You'll be the judge	4.5 6.5 8.0	
Bloody Rear Extreme	■ Fighting maniacs was kinda cool at first, but now it's time to neuter these brawlers	4.0 4.0 5.0	
BMX XXX	■ An X-rated BMX game... boy was that a bad idea	2.5 3.0 3.5	
Bruce Lee: Quest of the Dragon	■ Bruce Lee's family actually sued the developers, or at least they should have	-- 2.0 --	
Bruce Force	■ Kind of like a poor man's Halo with a giant lizard. Not brilliant, but decent	6.0 6.5 7.0	
Buffy the Vampire Slayer	■ Does an admirable job of representing the "Buffyverse" in videogame form	6.0 6.0 7.5	
Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds	■ Like a Buffy episode: decent plot, lots of fighting, and bad vampire puns	4.5 6.5 7.5	

TETRIS

The 8-bit Nintendo version was EGM's first Game of the Month recipient.

XBOX

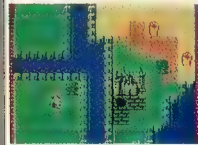
GAME	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Burnout	■ A great smash 'em, crash 'em racer	8.0	-- Silver
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	■ Addictive kamikaze driving, and you can rip your own tunes	8.5 8.5 7.5	Silver
Capcom vs. SNK 2: ED	■ Capcom keeps churning out the 2D fighters like there's no tomorrow. Luckily, most are good	7.5 7.5 9.0	Silver
Col Damage	■ A warm, fuzzy <i>Twisted Metal</i> for those adverse to insane clowns and vehicular homicide	6.5 8.0 8.5	
Circus Maximus: Chariot Wars	■ You ever wonder what it would be like to race chariots through ancient Rome? Us neither	1.5 3.5 4.0	
Colin McRae Rally 3	■ If it weren't any more realistic, you'd have a Scottish accent and be plucking dirt out of your teeth	9.0	-- Gold
Conflict: Desert Storm II Back to Baghdad	■ A title that makes the current conflict sound like a ride at Disneyland	4.0 5.5 6.0	
Cosmic Bandcock: The Wrath of Cortez	■ This lame platformer makes us pine for the Crash of yesterday	5.0	--
Crazy Taxi 2: High Roller	■ Makin' crazy money in Sin City without setting foot in a casino	8.0 8.0 9.0	Silver
Crimson Sea	■ It's like <i>Dynasty Warriors</i> , but in outer space. What's not to like?	7.0 7.0 7.5	
Dark Angel	■ We'll take any game that lets us play as the sassy Jessica Alba	6.0	--
Dark Summit	■ Show those squares trying to keep you down the power of snowboarding!	7.0 7.0 7.0	
Dead or Alive 3	■ A fighting game showcasing loath girls with obvious—and bouncy—talents	7.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball	■ A titillating—if shallow—little package. Just like a good woman... sort of	6.0 7.5 8.0	
Dead to Rights	■ Namco's action opus is more yawn inducing than it is exciting	5.0 5.0 6.0	
Deathrow	■ In the future, rapstar will be deadly. And have bad graphics	4.5	--
Dino Crisis 3	■ Surprisingly, the real threat in space isn't dinosaurs—it's a debilitating camera	6.0 6.5 6.5	
Dragon's Lair: 3D	■ Most of us actually prefer the old full-motion videogame to this mediocre platformer	2.5 5.0 6.0	
Dungeons & Dragons: Heroes	■ It's kind of like <i>Gauntlet</i> with character sheets and +2/-2 armor. And less fun	5.5 6.0 6.5	
The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind	■ More stuff to do than in real life! Too bad the graphics are so sucky	7.0 7.5 8.5	
Enclave	■ Very pretty graphics on an otherwise boring <i>007</i> -style action game	6.0 6.0 6.0	
Enter the Matrix	■ More glitches and bugs than the movie's story has plot holes	3.5 3.5 6.0	
ESPN NBA Basketball	■ One of the greatest hoops games ever made? All signs point to "Yes"	8.5 9.0 9.5	Gold
ESPN NHL Hockey	■ The closest thing to a perfect game of hockey you'll find anywhere	8.5 9.0 9.0	Silver
F1 2001	■ Step into the shoes of a prima donna and drive a glorified go-kart at breakneck speeds	6.5	-- Silver
Fatal Frame	■ Finally, survival-horror for all you shatterfreaks out there. <i>Shal</i> those souls, baby!	8.5	--
FIFA Soccer 2004	■ Yet another great sports game from EA Sports. They might be on to something here	7.5 8.0 9.0	Silver
Friday Flyers	■ This wacky zero-kart racer looks cool but never quite gets off the ground	3.0 4.0 5.0	
Freedom Fighters	■ Saving the Big Apple from Russian invaders feels almost historically fun	7.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
Furious Karting	■ Good racing game, unfortunate name. Prepare for lots of <i>Curtis</i> <i>Farting</i> jokes	7.0	--
Futurama	■ Bender and the gang should have stayed canceled	4.5 5.0 5.0	
Fuzion Frezzy	■ The videogame equivalent of a big party. If by "party" you mean "root canal"	3.0 4.0 4.0	
Genma Onimusha	■ Genma stands for "we're not making a new game. Just repackaging last year's hit"	6.5 7.5 8.0	
Gears	■ Who knew gladiator combat was so slow and methodical? It's still fun, though	6.0 7.0 8.5	
Godzilla: Destroy All Monsters Melee	■ Soaring up guys in rubber suits is fun. Look! You can use Mecha's springs!	4.0 7.0 7.0	
The Great Escape	■ If they weren't gonna resurrect Steve McQueen, we bet he'd like to be in a better game than this	4.0 4.5 6.5	
Group 3 Challenge	■ Looks like your dream car, but plays like your dad's station wagon	5.0 5.0 6.0	
Gun Metal	■ All the Xbox. Home of mediocre giant-transforming-robot games	5.0	--
GunValkyrie	■ An action game hard enough to send you to a controller-breaking rampage	5.5 5.5 7.5	
Halo	■ If you own an Xbox, you should own this first-person shooter. And a television	10 10 10	Platinum
Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup	■ The flying soccer-on-broomsticks game actually makes a pretty keen sports title	6.5 7.5 7.5	
The House of the Dead III	■ The game's OK, but the included <i>HOTD</i> movie trailer is pure B-movie gold	7.0 7.0 7.5	
Hurter: The Reckoning	■ Similar to classics like <i>Robotron</i> and <i>Smash TV</i> . Just not quite as good	5.5 6.5 7.5	
Hurter: The Reckoning Redeemer	■ Another back-and-slash trip to Aehroft! leaves us with a sense of déjà vu	6.0 6.0 7.5	
Harrison Jones and the Emperor's Tomb	■ Harrison Ford may be suckin' Geralt, but Indy still kicks virtual ass	5.5 8.5 8.5	
I-Ninja	■ What <i>I-Ninja</i> lacks in some places, it makes up for in sheer variety	6.0 6.5 8.0	
Inside Pitch 2003	■ The first baseball game from Microsoft deserves a pat on the ass for effort	5.5 5.5 6.0	
The Italian Job	■ A game about driving Minis to get more Minis...and then driving those Minis	3.5 4.0 6.5	
James Bond 007: NightFire	■ The best Bond since <i>GoldenEye</i> . <i>NightFire</i> serves up awesome shooting action	8.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
James Bond in Agent Under Fire	■ Shaken. Stirred. No matter how you take <i>Agent Under Fire</i> , it tastes bitter	4.5 5.0 6.0	
Jet Set Radio Future	■ <i>JSRF</i> 's ill style and just a little substance	7.0 7.0 9.0	
Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis	■ Build the best park you can, then feed all the happy families to the T-Rex. Fun!	7.0	--
Kabuki Warriors	■ The first coaster we ever owned with the Xbox logo on it	2.5	--
Kakuto Chopin: Back Alley Brutal	■ A crappy fighter that got realtied banks to verses from the Koran being sung when the credits roll	2.5 3.0 4.0	
Kill Switch	■ Stealth-action gameplay that's as gripping as it is one-dimensional	6.0 6.5 7.5	
Knockout Kings 2002	■ Floats like a butterfly, stings like a bee, won't throw in the towel...you get the idea	8.5 8.5 7.0	
Kung Fu Chaos	■ Bad fighting game, but what a showcase of insulting racial stereotypes	4.0 4.0 5.5	
Legacy of Kain: Blood Omen II	■ The bloodsucking antihero makes a comeback that would make Lil' Cool J jealous	8.5	-- Silver
Links 2004	■ Go it alone or hop online for a match. Good, but not quite Tiger Woods	6.5 6.5 7.5	
The Lord of the Rings: Fellowship	■ After playing this mess, we kind of hoped Frodo would be mashed into baking food	3.0 3.5 4.5	
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	■ Play as Aragorn, Gimli, or Legolas through the first two epic-smashin' movies. Good times	8.0 8.5 8.5	Silver
Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter	■ Atec was in development for something like four years. Too bad it doesn't show	5.5 5.5 5.5	
Mad Dash Racing	■ Eides makes a mad dash at mediocrity with this slow, boring racer	5.0 5.0 5.0	
Madden NFL 2004	■ The new Playmaker Control feature helps keep Madden king of the gridiron	9.5 9.0 9.5	Gold
Marvel vs. Capcom 2: New Age of Heroes	■ It's an online fighting game, so that's cool. But it's old and laggy, so that's kinda lame	6.0 6.0 7.0	

WHAT'S ALL THEY WROTE

Sometimes, there ain't much to say, so here's a random selection of game reviews.

Hydlide

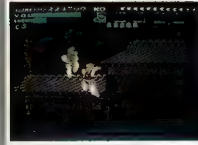
Type: Quest Release: 06/31
Levels of Play: -- Difficulty: Hard



I can't remember what this game was about. That's about all I can say about Hydlide.

Flying Dragon

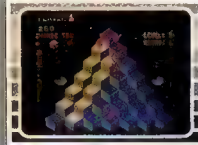
Type: Action Release: 09/01
Levels of Play: -- Difficulty: Easy



Just another karate game.

Q*Bert

Type: Action Release: Now
Levels of Play: 36 Difficulty: Easy



This is a good translation from the original arcade Q*Bert game. There's not much to say, it's Q*Bert.

**TOP 5 DREAMCAST
REVIEW SCORES**



1. SOUL CALIBUR
10, 10, 10, 10 • Platinum



**2. TONY HAWK'S
PRO SKATER 2**
10 • Platinum



**3. RESIDENT EVIL
CODE: VERONICA**
10, 9.5, 9.5 • Gold



4. NFL 2K1
10, 9.5, 9.5 • Gold



5. SKIES OF ARCADIA
9.5, 9.0, 9.5 • Gold

XBOX

GAME	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Max Payne	■ Venillate poems and survive drug-induced nightmares in this violent shooter	7.0	8.0 8.5
MechAssault	■ Screw complex controls. This is fun, arcade-style mech combat. And it's even online!	8.0	8.5 Silver
Metal Arms: Glitch in the System	■ A surprisingly good shoot-'em-up that plays almost exactly like Halo	8.0	8.0 Silver
Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	■ Even the whiny pretty-boy antagonist can't keep us away from MGS2	9.5	9.5 Gold
Midnight Club II	■ It's like <i>The Fast and the Furious</i> , only online and without all the hot chicks	8.0	8.5 Silver
Midtown Madness 3	■ Call it <i>Midnight Club II Lite</i> . Best played over Xbox Live with some buds	7.0	7.0 7.5
MotorGP: Ultimate Racing Technology	■ Very fast and very pretty. Just like that girl you met in Vegas a couple weeks ago. You stud	8.5	9.0 Silver
Motor Trend Presents: Lotus Challenge	■ This driving game is so bad it almost made the president of Lotus close the factory	3.5	4.0 4.5
Murakumo	■ If you think a huge robot shooting other huge robots sounds fun, you're wrong	5.0	5.5 5.5
NASCAR Heat 2002	■ As far as turning left in the time ops, <i>NASCAR Thunder 2002</i> does it better	6.0	6.5 7.0
NASCAR Thunder 2003	■ EA's circle-track simulator is so realistic you can almost get high off the exhaust fumes	9.0	-- -- Gold
NASCAR Thunder 2004	■ Go door handle lu door handle with NASCAR superstars in the best oval-track racer yet	8.0	8.0 9.5 Silver
NBA 2K2	■ You couldn't get a much better hoops game back in the day	9.0	-- -- Gold
NBA 2K3	■ Bringing you the best hoops games ever, one year at a time	9.0	-- -- Gold
NBA Inside Drive 2002	■ Microsoft's first roundballer takes the court and wows the audience	7.0	7.5 8.0
NBA Inside Drive 2003	■ Fulfill all your '90s fantasies with this hoop game	7.0	-- --
NBA Jam	■ Boomshakalaka and all that jazz	5.0	6.0 7.0
NBA Live 2003	■ EA's hoops franchise returns to respectability	8.0	-- -- Silver
NBA Live 2004	■ EA Sports delivers its best hoops game in years. And it's online for PS2, to boot!	8.0	8.5 9.0 Silver
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit 2	■ Surprisingly, this racer is plagued with issues not found in the kick-ass PS2 version	7.0	-- --
New Legends	■ In the early days of the Xbox, bad action games flowed like wine	4.0	4.0 4.5
NFL 2K2	■ Once again, Sega puts together a great game that just doesn't quite top Madden	8.5	9.0 9.0 Silver
NFL Blitz 20-02	■ Midway's signature gridiron game claws its way back to prominence	7.5	-- --
NFL Blitz Pro	■ An attempt to make <i>Blitz</i> more realistic provides fairly good results	6.0	7.0 7.0
NFL Fever 2002	■ Microsoft's first NFL game doesn't suck, but it's no Madden, either	5.5	6.0 6.5
NFL Fever 2003	■ This football series just can't seem to get into the end zone	5.5	5.5 7.5
NFL Fever 2004	■ Microsoft's gridiron game continues to lose yardage to Madden and ESPN	6.5	6.5 8.0
NHL 2004	■ Too much force and not enough finesse hurts EA's puck offering	6.5	7.0 8.5
NHL 20-02	■ Midway gives hockey the <i>NFL Blitz</i> treatment, and it works	8.0	-- -- Silver
NHL Blitz Pro	■ All the great taste of <i>NHL Blitz</i> , now with 10 players on the ice. Refreshing!	7.5	8.0 8.5 Silver
Nightcaster	■ We don't know what's more surprising: How bad <i>Nightcaster</i> is, or that it got a sequel	3.0	4.0 4.5
Odyssey: Munch's Odyssey	■ Guide a hopping bird through one weird level after another. Why more fun than it sounds	9.0	9.0 Gold
Ogg: World of Demons	■ Go to <i>Devil May Cry</i> on a bunch of demons in a classic Japanese setting	9.0	9.0 Silver
Outlaw Golf	■ The trailer park meets the golf course in this trashy, yet refined, game	6.0	7.0 8.0
Outlaw Volleyball	■ Sussied up trailer park girls frolic balls and throw punches in scenic seaside locales	6.5	7.0 7.0
Phantom Dragon Orta	■ A gorgeous shooter with about a billion secrets to unlock	8.5	9.0 Silver
Pentasy Star Online: Episode I & II	■ Go meet scary people who spend way too much time whacking things with swords	9.0	9.0 Gold
Phantom Crash	■ A quality mach game on Xbox, but as deep as a headbun	7.5	8.0 8.5 Silver
Pirates of the Caribbean	■ The looks of Orlando Bloom, but without all the comic genes	4.5	5.5 6.0
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time	■ The King... er, Prince has returned. And boy is he looking great for his age	9.0	9.5 Gold
Prisoner of War	■ It's like <i>Hogan's Heroes</i> , but without all the comic genes	6.0	6.5 7.5
Project Gotham Racing	■ Drive with style to earn kudos. Despite the name, neither Salman nor Robin make an appearance	8.0	8.5 9.0 Silver
Quantum Redshift	■ This was supposed to be the Xbox's <i>F-Zero</i> . Keep tryin', boys	6.0	6.0 6.5
RailSport Challenge	■ One of the prettiest—and toughest—rally games we've ever played	8.0	8.5 Silver
Red Faction II	■ Destroy everything in this first-person shooter that desperately needs online play	7.5	-- --
Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Tides of War	■ Go online and work as a team to shoot Nazis and zombie Nazis. Just like our forefathers	8.5	8.5 9.5 Silver
RoadKill	■ It's like <i>Twisted Metal</i> meets <i>Grand Theft Auto III</i> with all the fun removed	5.0	5.0 8.0
Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown	■ Surely robbing from the rich and giving to the poor was never this confusing	3.0	4.5 6.0
RoboCop	■ Dead or alive, you're going with him. After playing this game, we'd choose the first option	2.5	3.5 4.0
Robotech: Battletory	■ A great game, but strictly for those who know what a Zentradi is	7.5	8.0 8.5 Silver
Rocky	■ Yo, Adrian. Play through all five <i>Rocky</i> movies in this boxer	6.5	7.0 7.5
Rogue Ops	■ Deadly snakes Sam Fisher and Solid Snake may have some new competition in <i>Rogue Ops</i>	4.5	6.0 7.0
Run Like Hell	■ It's kind of like <i>Resident Evil</i> in space, except not as good	6.5	-- --
SeaBlade	■ A cheap game with a lame story and boring gameplay. We were shocked, too	4.5	-- --
Sega GT 2002	■ <i>Gran Turismo 3</i> it ain't, but Sega's sports-car racer still feels good	8.0	8.5 9.5 Silver
Sega GT Online	■ Awesome online modes and the entire <i>Sega GT 2002</i> , for \$20. Sign us up	8.5	8.5 9.5 Silver
Serious Sam	■ Scaly, the smash hit PC first-person shooter ran and looked like rubbish on Xbox	3.5	-- --
Shenmue II	■ The shiner's won off Sega's epic series, but it's still a pretty damn good game	8.5	8.5 7.5
Shrek	■ Just how bad is <i>Shrek</i> ? Our Xbox actually got this disc back out at us	2.5	4.0 4.5
Strut	■ We'd eat a bucket of orzo before going back to this party	2.0	-- --
Stink Super Party	■ Xbox owners get all-new bits in their <i>Silent Hill 2</i> , as well as an extra helping of slowdown	7.5	7.5 8.0 Silver
Silent Hill 2: Restless Dreams	■ As <i>Comic Book Guy</i> would say: "Best. Simpsons game. Ever."	8.5	7.0 8.0
The Simpsons: Hit & Run	■ We've seen games suck before, but this was the suckiest sack that ever sucked	3.0	4.0 4.0
The Simpsons: Road Rage	■ We originally thought <i>Smashing Drive</i> was cool, but we were kinda drunk at the time	6.5	-- --
Smashing Drive	■ A mediocre action game with some retro online options	3.5	6.5 7.0
Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix	■ The most fun you can have whacking otherwise opponents with sharp metal objects	9.0	10 Gold
Soul Calibur II			

(Wait 'til you see the one left in your pants.)



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Strong Language
Violence



Microsoft
game studios



majesco.com

3 Women have reviewed games for EGM (ex-staff member Jeanne Kim, Jennifer Tsao, and Carrie Shepherd of GameNOW)

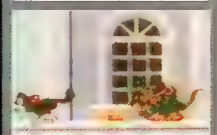
WIA
We've now reviewed a basket of games that never made it to U.S. store shelves. And, surprisingly, all were total crap.



1. AIR BOARD'N USA
N64 • 1.5, 3.5, 2.0, 1.5



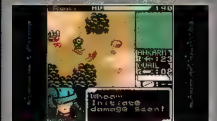
2. MR. GIMMICK
NES • 4.0, 5.0, 8.0, 5.0



3. SOCKS THE CAT
SNES • 6.0, 6.0, 5.0, 5.0, 7.0



4. LOBO
Genesis • 3.0, 3.0, 3.0, 2.5



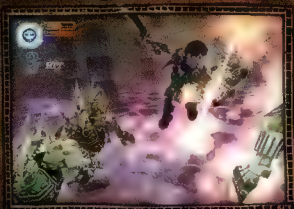
5. FASTLEJI
Neo-Geo Pocket Color • 7.5, 8.5, 8.0, 8.0 • Silver Award

XBOX			
GAME	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy	■ A cool action game with more mummies than the movie <i>The Mummy</i>	7.0 7.0 8.0	
Spider-Man	■ Sure, he looks good. But of <i>Spider-Man</i> gets stuck in a web of mediocre gameplay	6.5 -- --	
Spy Hunter	■ A truly great re-creation of the classic coin-op. As for the upcoming SH flick? We're worried	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
SSX 3	■ Slidin' and shreddin' on a single mountain is the focus of this kick-ass sequel	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Starsky & Hutch	■ Huggy Bear lends his voice to this disappointing '70s revival	3.5 4.0 7.0	
Star Trek: Shattered Universe	■ Gameplay more broken than William Shatner's career. Don't go where no man's gone before	3.0 3.0 3.0	
Star Wars: Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast	■ Learn the Force, you will. Shoot lots of brainless stormtroopers, you shall	7.5 8.0 8.0	
Star Wars: Starfighter Special Edition	■ Live all your Jake Lloyd fantasies in this average fly-in-shoot game. Or don't	5.5 -- --	
Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic	■ A really long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, there was one hell of an RPG	9.0 9.5 10	Gold
Star Wars: Obi-Wan	■ This lame action game further sullies the <i>Star Wars</i> name. George Lucas has no soul!	3.5 3.5 3.5	
Star Wars: The Clone Wars	■ <i>Twisted Metal</i> meets <i>Star Wars</i> with online play. No "Shoot the Jar-Jar" minigames	6.5 7.0 7.0	
State of Emergency	■ Beating up hordes of innocent bystanders is fun for awhile	6.5 6.5 6.5	
Steel Battalion	■ Such an amazing mech sim that we think it's worth the \$200 asking price	8.0 8.0 9.5	Silver
Superman: Man of Steel	■ Looks like <i>Superman</i> into the kryptonite III this game. At least it's better than <i>Superman 64</i>	2.5 4.0 4.0	
SWAT: Global Strike Team	■ Hey look, another squad-based shooter. You just don't see enough of those these days	4.0 5.0 6.0	
Tao Feng: Fist of the Lotus	■ Nothing but a low-rent <i>Mortal Kombat</i> . We think that says it all, don't you?	3.5 4.0 6.0	
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	■ Everyone's favorite mutant ninja turtles need a four-player cooperative mode	5.5 6.0 7.0	
The Terminator: Dawn of Fate	■ Anyone who votes for <i>Arnold</i> never played this game. We demand a recall!	4.5 4.5 4.5	
Test Drive	■ Atari revives a classic driver in form. No <i>Cameos by Vin Diesel</i>	8.0 -- --	Silver
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	■ Swingin' the woods with Mr. Woods gave our reviewers wood. Or something like that	9.0 9.0 8.5	Gold
TimeSplitters 2	■ Another good first-person shooter that should have shipped with online play	8.0 -- --	Silver
ToeJam & Earl III	■ Take some wacky aliens, a stolen record collection, and funkify it a bit	7.0 7.0 7.5	
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	■ Learn to infiltrate, cover your squadmates, and shoot bad guys full of holes	7.5 8.0 8.0	
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Island Thunder	■ Shoot, snipe, sneak, and get your buddy's back. No "Shoot the Jar-Jar" minigames!	7.8 7.0 7.5	
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	■ Sam Fisher craps bigger than Solid Snake. Can <i>MSSJ</i> hope to outdo this masterpiece?	8.5 9.0 9.5	Gold
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	■ The Hawk continues to fly high over the world of gaming	9.8 9.0 10	Gold
Top Spin	■ The most fun you can have with tennis outside of nude photos of Anisa Kournikova	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Townhall	■ You like to drive fast? You like to smash stuff? You'll dig <i>Townhall</i> !	7.8 -- --	
Transworld Surf	■ Hey, it's not the just like <i>Tony Hawk</i> on waves. Hell! It's not million. Or not	6.5 -- --	
Triple Play Baseball 2002	■ With the bases loaded in this sticky baseball title, EA struck out	3.5 4.5 6.0	
Turok: Evolution	■ Robo-dinos with <i>Civil War</i> origins on their backs? What's not to like?	5.0 5.0 --	
UFC: Tapout	■ Not even unsaturated man-love could save this boring fighter from the bargain bin	5.0 6.0 6.5	
UFC: Tapout 2	■ Crappy, half-naked men locked in mortal ecstasy. We mean combat!	5.0 6.0 6.5	
Unreal Championship	■ Turning your friends and enemies into little bloody chads has never been so satisfying	8.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
Voodoo Vision	■ Hurt your character in order to inflict pain on your enemies. A cool twist on classic platformers	6.0 6.5 7.0	
Wallace & Gromit in Project Zoo	■ A mediocre game about a show no one cares about anymore. Who else is excited?	4.5 6.5 6.5	
World Series Baseball	■ Kicks more ass than a Yankee fan after a World Series loss	8.5 9.0 9.0	Silver
World Series Baseball 2K3	■ Sega's game of stick finally hits one out of the park after years on the bench	8.0 -- --	Silver
Wreckless: The Yakuza Missions	■ Surprisingly, this driving game isn't a wreck at all	7.0 7.5 8.0	
WWE Raw	■ Slow and steady wins the game in this squared-circle travesty	5.5 7.5 7.0	
WWE Raw 2: Ruthless Aggression	■ As much fun as a kick in the junk	3.0 4.5 5.5	
XGRA	■ <i>Extreme G</i> futuristic racing makes a comeback, complete with a confusing new name	6.5 6.5 7.5	
XIII	■ Ubisoft's promising toon-shaded first-person shooter doesn't quite live up to the hype	6.5 6.5 6.5	

GAMECUBE			
GAME	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
18 Wheeler: American Pro Trucker	■ 18 wheels and maybe 15 minutes of fun. Just keep on truckin'	5.5 -- --	
All-Star Baseball 2002	■ It's baseball, all right, and now with 30 percent more all-stars	7.0 7.0 7.0	
All-Star Baseball 2003	■ Solid video representation of the American national pastime	5.0 7.0 7.0	
Animal Crossing	■ Brilliant and quirky, <i>Animal Crossing</i> lets you build your own world.	9.8 9.0 9.5	Gold
Army Men: Sarge's War	■ Yet another mediocre third-person shooter in the <i>Army Men</i> series	4.0 4.5 5.0	
Batman: Dark Tomorrow	■ S*** sandwich	1.6 1.5 2.0	
Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu	■ Bruce Wayne's hefty charge purse couldn't even save this piece of bat dung from sinking	4.0 4.0 5.5	
Beach Bikers	■ Volleyball done right on GameCube	8.0 -- --	Silver
Beyond Good & Evil	■ A revolutionary start in platforming from the creative force behind <i>Rayman</i>	9.0 9.0 8.5	Silver
Big Air Freestyle	■ Big air, little excitement	4.0 -- --	
Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg	■ Who knew rolling eggs could be this fun?	7.0 8.0 8.5	
Blood On 2	■ Vampire action bloods competence	6.5 -- --	
Bloody Roar: Personal Fury	■ Middy fun beat-'em-up with fighters who can transform into beasts	5.0 6.0 7.0	
BomberBram	■ Little man, big bombs, great fun	8.0 8.5 8.5	Silver
Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds	■ The spunky undead-slayer can't seem to stab quite like she used to	6.5 4.5 7.5	
Burnout	■ A solid racer, <i>Burnout</i> sports the best wrecks of any game, anywhere	8.0 -- --	Silver
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	■ More <i>Burnout</i> with more spectacular crashes	7.5 8.0 8.5	
Conflict: Desert Storm	■ The mother of all wars becomes the reheaded stepchild of videogames	5.5 5.5 6.5	

MAXIMO ARMY OF ZIN

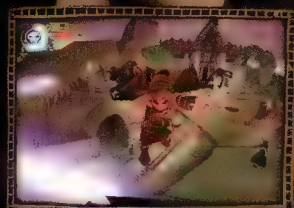
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PlayStation 2

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TOP 5 SUPER NINTENDO
REVIEW SCORES



1. STREET FIGHTER II
10, 10, 9.0, 9.0 • Gold



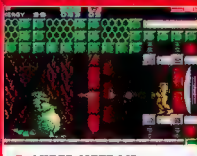
2. STREET FIGHTER II TURBO
10, 10, 9.0, 9.0 • Gold



3. DONKEY KONG COUNTRY
9.0, 10, 9.0, 9.0 • Gold



4. CHRONO TRIGGER
9.0, 9.0, 9.5, 9.5 • Gold



5. SUPER METROID
9.0, 9.0, 9.5, 9.0 • Gold

GAMECUBE

GAME	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Crash Bandicoot: The Wrath of Cortex	■ Or: Crash gets a new hat! More of the same	8.0 -- --	
Dobbers	■ Quirky cube-based monster nurturing. It's surprisingly fun	8.5 7.0 7.0	
Cable's Robots for Everyone: Showdown	■ Kid stuff, really. With robots!	7.0 -- --	
Dark Summit	■ Snowcaving and a loopy story combine for a pretty good extreme sports game	7.0 -- --	
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	■ This fine, tricked-out BMX game wants playing	6.5 -- --	Silver
Die Hard Vendetta	■ Die a little death playing this "adventure"	4.0 -- --	
Driven	■ As in "this crazy movie lie-in should be driven off a cliff"	2.5 -- --	
Egg Mania: Eggstreme Madness	■ Moderately fun puzzle game. Not Eggcremental	6.0 -- --	
Enter the Matrix	■ With nearly unlimited superhero potential, even Neo couldn't save this mangled mess	3.5 3.5 6.0	
ESPN NHL Hockey	■ Another slick update to ESPN's hockey franchise. It's Zamboni-polished	8.5 8.0 9.0	Silver
Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem	■ Creepy adventure with delightful insanity effects for messing with your mind	7.5 8.5 9.0	Silver
Evolution Worlds	■ A cutesy, chunky anime-style RPG	4.0 -- --	
FIFA 2002	■ This soccer game has balls aplenty. And kick, to boot!	7.0 7.0 --	
FIFA Soccer 2004	■ An addict Career mode makes FIFA the deepest of the soccer riffs	7.5 8.0 9.0	Silver
Freedom Fighters	■ Spilly squad-based action for the Red Dawn lover. (Patrick Swayze not included)	8.5 7.5 8.0	Silver
F-Zero GX	■ Futuristic racing. Beautiful, but way too difficult	7.0 7.5 9.0	
Gladius	■ Turn-based gladiatorial action.	8.5 7.0 6.0	
Godzilla: Destroy All Monsters Melee	■ The king of monsters stars in a 3D fighting game	7.0 7.0 7.5	
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	■ Young Harry casts a spell on GameCube	6.5 7.0 8.5	
Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup	■ The Potter-branded, broomstick-saddled sport that'd make Earnhardt Jr. piss his pants	6.5 7.5 7.5	
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	■ Silent. But deadly. And Bald.	7.0 8.0 8.5	
Home Ran King	■ It's only the king of medicine baseball	4.0 4.5 5.0	
Hunter: The Reckoning	■ Horror-themed beat-em-up. Doesn't suck	6.0 6.5 7.0	
Ikaruga	■ Inspired old-school 2D shooter	8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
I-Ninja	■ Think Ninja Gaiden's Ryu Hyobusa with hydrocephalus	8.0 6.0 6.5	
Jeremy McGrath Supercross World	■ It's a supercross game. Now let us never speak of it again	3.0 -- --	
Kirby's Air Ride	■ One-button star cruising for those bored with typical kart races	8.0 7.0 6.0	
The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker	■ Link returns in this cartoony, polished adventure	9.5 10 10	Gold
Legends of Wrestling 2	■ Old-school wrestlers tear it up	5.0 6.0 7.0	
The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King	■ Frodo and friends fend off the orcs in an attempt to save Middle-earth. Sound familiar?	8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	■ More decapitations than <i>The Lord of the Dance</i>	8.0 8.5 8.5	Silver
Lost Kingdoms	■ It's a fun, card-based action-RPG	7.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
Lost Kingdoms II	■ Card-based RPG that's tough to master	5.0 6.0 7.0	
Lullig's Mansion	■ Almost spooktacular. But not quite	9.0 8.0 5.5	
Madden NFL 2004	■ Options aplenty in 2004's super-deep Franchise mode. You can even renovate stadiums	9.5 8.0 9.5	Gold
Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour	■ Mario and pals play golf. Tee-lightful!	7.5 8.0 8.0	
Mario Kart: Double Dash!!	■ Kart-racing gold that'll make you want to sell your convertible. Auto-grinding perfection	9.5 10 10	Gold
Mario Party 4	■ Ain't no party like a Mario Party	8.0 8.5 8.5	Silver
Model of Honor: Frontline	■ First-person shooter set in WWII. It's Nazi-killing fun	7.0 -- --	
Mega Man Network Transmission	■ Side-scroller with bad music and niche gameplay	5.5 6.0 6.5	
Metal Arms: Glitch in the System	■ Disguised as kiddie fun, <i>Metal Arms</i> packs steel-rosed combat without pads	8.0 8.0 9.0	Silver
Metroid Prime	■ Brilliant first-person-shooter-cum-platformer	10 10 10	Platinum
Mystic Heroes	■ Button-mashing fighter. Don't bother	5.5 -- --	
NASCAR Thunder 2003	■ Makes turning left ad nauseam fun	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
NASCAR Thunder 2004	■ Over 200 miles per hour. Forty-two cars on the same track. Yeah, that's a rush	9.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
NBA 2K2	■ Basketball done beautifully	9.0 -- --	Gold
NBA 2K3	■ Once more to the hoop!	9.0 -- --	Gold
NBA Courtside	■ Not quite a slam dunk, but this basketball game gets the ball to the net	7.0 8.0 8.0	
NBA Live 2004	■ EA takes to the courts again for another grand b-ball bash. It's got game!	8.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
NBA Street Vol. 2	■ Goofy-cool hoops action with exaggerated dunks, slams, and passes	8.5 8.5 9.5	Silver
Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit II	■ In pursuit of greatness, this driving game falls short. But it still rocks	6.5 -- --	
NFL Blitz Pro	■ Blazing-hot football that was probably kept in the oven a bit too long	7.0 8.8 7.0	
NFL Quarterback Club 2002	■ A 10-car pileup of a football game	4.5 -- --	
NHL Hit Pro	■ What's hockey without bad rules? <i>Hitz</i> takes the already-brutal sport to the max	7.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
Pac-Man World 2	■ Pac-Man goes 3D for a fun adventure that's played by a bad camera	7.5 -- --	
Phantasy Star Online Episode II & III	■ Epic online RPG. It's two great games in one	9.0 9.0 10	Gold
Pikania	■ Control a plant army in a weird and wonderful adventure	8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
PL03	■ Odd shooter with a sexy heroine and little else	4.0 4.0 5.0	
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time	■ The baggy-pants prince inherits <i>Max Payne's</i> time-warping skills. And upgrades 'em	9.0 9.5 9.5	Gold
Resident Evil 4	■ A frightful prequel to the series that defined survival-horror	8.8 8.0 9.0	Silver
Resident Evil	■ Horror classic gets a face-lift for GameCube. Wonderful!	9.0 9.0 9.5	Gold
Resident Evil 2	■ Uninspired port of an old PlayStation classic	5.5 -- --	
Resident Evil 3: Nemesis	■ The horror comes from the lackluster effort Capcom put forth porting this to GameCube	5.5 -- --	
Rogue III	■ A blatant rip-off of every other car-combat game. Like their ugly, cello-baby offspring	5.5 6.0 5.0	
Rogue Ops	■ Wamabe Lara Croft plays stealthily covert agent. And does it better than Lara. Go figure	6.0 4.5 7.0	
Sega Soccer Slam	■ Over-the-top soccer with twisted teams and lots of balls	8.5 7.5 7.5	



Just tell your parents you were stoned. They'll understand.

responsibility

YOUR ANTI-DRUG.

22 Number of games EGM has reviewed with the word "extreme" or "xtreme" in the title.

BOTTOM OF THE BARREL

A review score of less than 1.0 is rare, but it does happen. For your reading pleasure, here are the few that have received this unwanted honor.



1. MORTAL KOMBAT ADVANCE
 GBA • 0.5, 0.0, 1.5



2. SUPERMAN 64
 N64 • 4.0, 1.5, 2.0, 0.5



3. THE FLINTSTONES: BEDROCK BOWLING
 PS1 • 0.5



4. DUKES OF HAZZARD II: DAISY DUKES IT OUT
 PS1 • 4.0, 0.5, 0.5

GAMECUBE

GAME	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
The Simpsons: Hit & Run	■ Bart and the rest of <i>The Simpsons</i> ensemble speed their way through Springfield	6.5 8.0 7.0	
The Simpsons: Road Rage	■ <i>Crazy Taxi</i> meets <i>The Simpsons</i> . It's just like the cartoon, without the fun	4.0 -- --	
The Sims	■ Control little computer people who have a better life than you do	8.0 8.5 9.5	Silver
Skies of Arcadia Legends	■ Fly the unfriendly skies in this awesome RPG	9.0 9.0 9.5	Gold
Smashing Drive	■ Not quite smashing, this driving game	6.0 5.5 5.5	
Smuggler's Run: Warzones	■ Runs smoothly, this one, and has great environments	8.5 -- --	Silver
Sonic Adventure 2: Battle	■ More Sonic shenanigans. Two-player mode makes the proceedings fun	6.5 7.0 6.5	
Sonic Adventure DX	■ The original <i>Sonic Adventure</i> (DC) with worse slowdown	4.5 6.5 7.0	
Sonic Mega Collection	■ A near-mega collection of old Sonic games	6.0 7.5 8.0	
Soul Calibur II	■ One of the greatest fighters ever developed. And Link o-c-stars. In green lights	9.0 10 10	Gold
Speed Kings	■ Motorcycle racing that's not entirely regal	4.5 4.5 7.5	
Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy	■ An unconventional pair of heroes make their way through this sandy platformer	8.0 7.0 7.0	
Spider-Man	■ With great responsibility comes a decent 3D adventure	6.5 -- --	
SSX 3	■ The fastest, roughest, freshest <i>SSX</i> to date. This mountain will eat you alive	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Star Fox Adventures	■ Fox McCloud leaves the cockpit for a 3D adventure. Solid, but flawed	4.5 8.0 8.0	
Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader	■ Phatter than Jek Pookins. And that's pretty phat	8.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rebel Strike	■ Luke and Wedge are better off keepin' their heads in space and feet off the ground	7.0 7.5 7.0	
Star Wars: The Clone Wars	■ Better than the mediocre <i>Star Wars</i> movie of the same name, but where's the online play?	8.0 6.5 8.5	
Summoner: A Goddess Returns	■ THQ summons up a decent RPG	6.5 -- --	
Super Mario Sunshine	■ Nintendo's poster boy stars in another brilliant and shiny platformer	9.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
Super Monkey Ball	■ Monkeys + balls = good, clean fun	9.0 7.0 8.5	Silver
Super Monkey Ball 2	■ More monkeys + more balls = more fun	7.5 8.5 9.0	Silver
Super Smash Bros. Melee	■ A superlative party game can best-em-up. With Jigglypuff. Bravisimo!	9.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
Swingers Golf	■ "Golf is a good walk wasted," said Mark Twain. Not here	6.5 7.5 7.5	
SX Superstar	■ Medicine racing allows you to become a whore and sell ad space on your rider's body	3.5 4.0 4.0	
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	■ A competent revival of <i>The Mean Green Fighting Machines'</i> multiplayer skills	5.5 7.0 6.0	
Terri's Worlds	■ How do you mess up <i>Terri's Worlds</i> shows you how. And no, it's not with exploding blocks	4.5 -- --	
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	■ No plaid pants here. Young pug <i>Tiger</i> knows how to drive it to the green with style	9.0 9.5 8.0	Gold
TimeSplitters 2	■ Time-hopping first-person shooter. Solid	7.0 -- --	
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	■ Go stealthy, young man	8.5 9.0 9.5	Gold
Tom Clancy's The Sum of All Fears	■ We fear this is a very mediocre game	5.5 -- --	
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	■ Sir Skatealot can't be beat	9.0 9.0 10	Gold
Tube Slider	■ It makes a better warg game than a videogame	2.5 3.5 4.0	
Ty the Toemanian Tiger	■ Toss another cute mascot wannabe on the barbie, mate	1.0 5.5 6.0	
Ultimate Muscle: Legends vs. New Generation	■ <i>Wraslin'</i> done right and downright goofy	7.5 7.5 8.5	
Universal Studios Theme Park Adventure	■ Save your scratch for the actual theme park	4.0 4.5 5.0	
Vexx	■ Dense platformer featuring an eminently dislikeable hero	6.0 7.5 9.0	
Viewtiful Joe	■ Finally tuned 2D/3D hybrid. Go ahead, say "Henshin-4-Go-Go-Baby" ten times fast	8.5 8.5 9.0	Silver
Virtua Striker 2002	■ A soccer game that doesn't live up to expectations. No goal	5.5 6.5 6.5	
Wallace & Gromit in Project Zoo	■ The Academy Award-winning clay toons make an average gambling debut	4.5 6.5 6.5	
Warfo World	■ It's a Warfo, and he's a-gonna win in this silly yet endearing platformer	6.0 7.0 7.0	
Wave Race: Blue Storm	■ A better-than-average water-based racer	8.0 8.5 8.0	
WWE Crush Hour	■ <i>Wraslin'</i> -themed car combat. Like pain, but worse	2.0 3.5 4.0	
WWE Wrestlemania X8	■ Enjoyable if you're into men and women in spandex	8.0 8.0 7.5	
WWE Wrestlemania XIX	■ Glitch-ridden but thankfully upgraded version of <i>Wrestlemania</i>	6.5 7.5 7.5	
XGRA	■ The Extreme Gravity Racing Association. Do you have your membership card?	7.5 6.5 6.5	
XIII	■ A living, breathing graphic novel in first-person, but it's just barely worth reading	6.5 6.5 6.5	
X-Men: Next Dimension	■ <i>Brawling, X-Men style</i>	6.0 6.0 8.0	

GAME BOY ADVANCE

GAME	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Advance Wars	■ Even if you hate strategy games, you'll love this one. Scarily addictive	8.0 7.5 6.5	
Advance Wars 2: Black Hole Rising	■ Vicious warfare with cartoon seasoning. Makes it easier to invade without guilt	8.0 8.5 8.0	Silver
Allstar Battle: Guardian of the Realm	■ It may tag at your old-school emotions, but this <i>Allstar Battle</i> is an 11th port	4.0 -- --	
Army Men Advance	■ A little green guy runs around and shoots things. You are yawning already	6.0 -- --	
Baseball Advance	■ <i>Saga</i> delivers a fine diamond sim with the <i>Outfield</i> title over	8.0 -- --	Silver
Boktai: The Sun Is in Your Hand	■ Escape to go outside? Sure. Escape to experience RPG splendor? Even better	9.0 8.0 9.5	Silver
Bombeman Tournament	■ Four-player battles with one cartridge, plus a <i>Pikmin</i> -ish RPG mode	7.0 -- --	
Breath of Fire	■ Not the best RPG on GBA, but a solid port of the Super Nintendo original	7.5 -- --	
Breath of Fire II	■ <i>Pikmin</i> 's RPGs float your boat? Everybody's instant in portable form	7.5 -- --	
Car Battle Joe	■ Next little cross between <i>Twisted Metal</i> and kid-friendly RPGs	7.0 -- --	
Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow	■ Who says Dracula's castle isn't the best vacation spot?	9.5 9.5 9.0	Gold
Castlevania: Circle of the Moon	■ Stunning graphics and gameplay. Warning: Playing without a light will prematurely blind you	9.0 10 9.5	Gold
Castlevania: Harmony of Dissonance	■ Can <i>Castlevania</i> get any better?	10 9.5 9.5	Gold

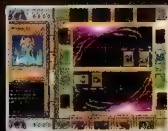
KONAMI

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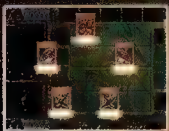
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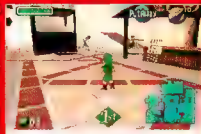
**PC
CD
ROM**

667 Games EGM's editor-in-chief, Dan "Shoe" Hsu, has reviewed for the mag during his tenure.

**TOP 5 NINTENDO 64
REVIEW SCORES**



**1. THE LEGEND OF ZELDA:
OCARINA OF TIME**
10, 10, 10 • Platinum



**2. THE LEGEND OF ZELDA:
MAJORA'S MASK**
10, 10, 10 • Platinum



3. SUPER MARIO 64
9.5, 9.5, 9.5, 9.5 • Gold



4. BANJO-KAZOOIE
9.5, 9.5, 9.5, 9.0 • Gold



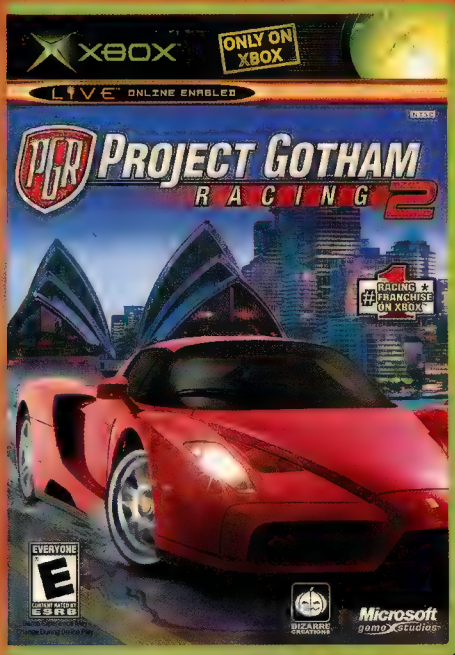
5. PAPER MARIO
9.5, 9.5, 9.0 • Gold

GAME BOY ADVANCE

GAME	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
ChuChu Rocket	■ Still one of the best GBA puzzlers, with a faintworthy 2,500 single-player levels	8.0 8.5 7.5	Silver
Columns Crown	■ Sega revises another puzzle classic with mediocre results	4.5 -- --	
Contra Advance: The Alien Wars EX	■ <i>Contra II</i> with some new enhancements and newer insane difficulty	6.5 -- --	
Crash Bandicoot: The Huge Adventure	■ Crash's fat-Elvis period continues with a merely competent platform title	6.5 6.0 7.0	
Crash Bandicoot 2: N-Tranced	■ <i>N-Tranced</i> may not live Bandicoot brilliance, but at least it's not on N-Gage	6.5 -- --	
Daredevil	■ Just watch the movie. Then imagine something worse than Ben Affleck in red leather	4.0 -- --	
Doom	■ If you want <i>Doom</i> , you've got <i>Doom</i> , though it's better played elsewhere	7.0 6.0 7.5	
Donkey Kong Country	■ Sadly, this Super Nintendo port won't have everybody goin' bananas	5.0 7.0 6.0	
Dragon Ball Z: Collectible Card Game	■ The only circumstance in which we'd recommend <i>Ku-Gi-Oh!</i> instead	2.0 3.0 2.0	
Dragon Ball Z: The Legacy of Goku	■ Not very good, but you're not buying it for its quality, are you?	6.0 5.5 6.0	
Dragon Ball Z: Legacy of Goku II	■ RPG appetites may not be whet, but hardcore <i>Goku</i> geeks might find solace here	5.5 6.0 5.0	
Earthworm Jim	■ Chintzy control and no save function drown this worm	5.0 4.5 6.5	
ESPN Final Round Golf 2002	■ Breathtaking graphics by GBA standards. Controls way more loosely than <i>Mario Golf</i>	8.0 -- --	Silver
Final Fantasy Tactics Advance	■ Square finally returns to the Game Boy. Now those are nice Tactics!	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Final Fight One	■ A GBA revival of the classic brawler—short one character, but still not bad	7.0 8.5 6.0	
Fire Emblem	■ A knightly RPG with an <i>Advance Wars</i> style of play	8.5 8.0 7.5	Silver
Fire Pro Wrestling	■ Addictive, strategic portable wreslin'. The Undertaker is "The Cremator" in this game	7.5 -- --	
Fortress	■ A <i>Tetris/Rampart</i> hybrid brought down by creeping frustration	5.0 -- --	
F-Zero Maximum Velocity	■ Few games use the L and R buttons all such exhilarating effect	9.0 7.5 7.0	
Golden Sun	■ Developer Camelot cranks out the best in Game Boy Advance role-playing	9.0 -- --	Gold
Golden Sun: The Lost Age	■ The follow-up to the GBA's deepest RPG since the next-gen portable came to fruition	8.0 8.5 8.0	Silver
GT Advance Championship	■ Fun, arcadey car racing. Lack of battery makes for long passwords	9.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
GT Advance 2: World Rally	■ Good game for taking the road on the road	7.0 -- --	
Gully Gear X: Advance Edition	■ Decent portable fighting with GBA's standard character stable	8.5 -- --	
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	■ Play it, but don't take it out during Potions class	8.0 -- --	Silver
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone	■ A passable portable adventure starring J.K. Rowling's youthful magician	4.5 6.5 4.5	
High Heat Major League Baseball 2002	■ 300's famous baseball simulation solidly survives its trip to the small screen	8.0 7.5 7.0	
The Incredible Hulk	■ Even with a basic mash-n-smash blueprint, things still went bust	4.0 4.0 6.0	
Iridion 3D	■ Hard-to-play shooter rendered in pseudo 3D. More a graphic detour than a real game	5.5 2.0 6.0	
Kirby: Highways in Dream Land	■ More-civilized remake of the NES <i>Kirby</i> , but now portable	6.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Klonoa: Empire of Dreams	■ Much more puzzle-oriented than his PlayStation platformer progeny	6.5 9.0 8.0	
Konami Crazy Racers	■ A surprisingly fun copy of <i>Mario Kart</i> , except without the length or difficulty	8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
Lady Sia	■ Standard platform action. For those who couldn't get enough of <i>Shantae</i>	4.5 -- --	
The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past	■ The best <i>Zelda</i> ever? If you don't know, you should try for yourself	9.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
The Lord of the Rings: Fellowship	■ The GBA game carries on the streak of inferiority to EA's titles	6.5 -- --	
The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King	■ Hobbits are tiny, but the rest of the game fits in a GBA cart, too. How does that work?	8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	■ Not quite as good as the first-up games. Call it a Gimli, not an Aragorn	7.5 -- --	
Lunar Legend	■ It's Lunar, Again. But this time in 2D... well, a sea	8.0 -- --	Silver
Lufia: The Rules of Lore	■ A noble, wholly entertaining review of the <i>Lufia</i> series on the portable	8.0 -- --	Silver
Mario Kart: Super Circuit	■ Like any <i>Mario Kart</i> , easy to get into and almost impossible to master	8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX	■ Tony Hawk's GBA excellence doesn't extend to his two-wheeled compadre	5.0 3.5 5.0	
Mega Man & Bass	■ Robot King steals Dr. Wily's blueprints and creates a surprisingly good romp for Mega Man	8.5 -- --	Silver
Mega Man Battle Network	■ A clever twist on the RPG genre in a digital <i>Mega Man</i> world	6.0 -- --	
Mega Man Battle Network 2	■ Formulaic but fun sequel	7.5 -- --	
Mega Man Battle Network 3	■ The blue bomber has no intention of exiting the battle network anytime soon, so jack in	6.5 8.5 7.5	
Mega Man Zero	■ Best standard <i>Mega Man</i> action on GBA, if you can take the abuse	8.0 8.5 7.5	Silver
Mega Man Zero II	■ Zero makes another go for side-scrolling glory in one of the toughest <i>Mega</i> titles yet	7.0 8.5 8.5	
Metroid Fusion	■ Samus returns, classical-style, in this excellent GBA outing	9.0 9.5 9.0	Gold
Mortal Kombat Advance	■ This bloody, botched port may be the GBA's worst game	5.0 0.5 1.5	
Mortal Kombat: Tournament Edition	■ A girly-man fighter. For sissies	4.0 4.0 5.5	
Motorcross Maniacs Advance	■ Konami's portable motocross racer comes back, as average as ever	5.0 -- --	
Namco Museum	■ <i>Ms. Pac-Man</i> , <i>Pole Position</i> , <i>Dig Dug</i> , <i>Galaga</i> , and <i>Galaxian</i> . Minuscule but playable	7.0 -- --	
Pac-Man Collection	■ Go dooty with three <i>Pac-Man</i> classics and one same <i>Tetris</i> wannabe	6.5 3.5 6.0	
Phantasy Star Collection	■ Vintage RPG depth for the gamer still living the 8- and 16-bit <i>Phantasy</i>	9.0 7.5 8.0	Silver
The Pinball of the Dead	■ Another of the abnormal number of good GBA pinball games, with zombies	6.0 7.0 7.0	
Pinobee: Wings of Adventure	■ Simple platformer from the <i>Blitz</i> folks. Later made into a PlayStation game	6.5 -- --	
Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure	■ This was a crap platformer the first time Activision released it... in 1994	2.0 -- --	
Pokemon Pinball: Ruby & Sapphire	■ After years of listening to Pikachu whine, you get to smack him with a pinball. How keen	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Pokemon Ruby & Sapphire	■ Gotha collect 'em all. Or so they say. Might as well dig into one more Poké-romp	7.5 7.5 6.5	
Puyo Puyo	■ Cute, addictive blob-dropping action in the classic <i>Puyo</i> tradition	8.0 -- --	Silver
Rayman Advance	■ A brilliant console-to-GBA conversion. The only issue: giant <i>Trayman</i> , tiny screen	7.5 7.5 6.5	
Ready 2 Rumble Round 2	■ Crossovered average portable brawler. Still bites off Punch King's ear any day	2.0 -- --	
Shining Soul	■ Set 1,000 years before <i>Shining Force</i> . It's like super-deformed <i>Diablo</i>	7.0 7.5 6.5	
Sonic the Hedgehog Advance	■ Sega's signature speedster keeps up the pace on GBA	8.0 8.0 7.0	
Sonic Advance 2	■ That speedy hedgehog shows no signs of slowing down, which is just the way we like it	8.5 8.5 8.5	Silver
Sonic Advance 3	■ Sonic and the rest of Sega's top franchise players face off in themed boards	7.0 8.0 7.5	

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WORST BOX ART

RIVAL TURF

SNES — Who better to market a *Double Dragon* knockoff than *Motie High's* math club? Pondexter will stab you with a protractor while Lamer uses his calculator watch to estimate the time it'll take you to bleed to death. Don't show, son.



MEGA MAN

NES — Capcom, it seems, field a crayon contest, asking retarded kids to draw a space-age ice cream man in front of their favorite Dishynyan ride.



TAGIN' DRAGON

NES — Seriously.



GAME BOY ADVANCE

GAME	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Spider-Man	■ Dives one or two of the things that a spider can	6.5 6.5 7.0	
Spider-Man: Mysterio's Menace	■ Frustratingly difficult, but pays off if you can deal with the ropey control	6.0 6.5 6.5	
Spyro the Dragon: Season of Ice	■ Better than his big brother on PS2, but not up to the <i>Spyro</i> standard	4.5 -- --	
Star Wars: Attack of the Clones	■ Better than Hayden Christensen's facial expressions	1.5 3.5 1.6	
Street Fighter Alpha 3	■ Surprisingly good port of the arcade fighter, but the GBA's sticky D-pad doesn't do it justice	7.0 -- --	
Super Dodge Ball Advance	■ Just as much lame fun as it is on the 8-bit Nintendo. Who knew dodgeball was so violent?	5.0 7.0 8.0	
Super Mario Advance	■ <i>Super Mario Bros. 2</i> with more stuff to collect. The first of many GBA <i>Mario</i> s	9.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Super Mario World: Super Mario Advance 2	■ Undoubtedly stands the test of time as one of history's greatest platformers	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Super Mario World 4: Super Mario Bros. 3	■ One of the best games of all time. Not just on GBA. Not just for a <i>Mario</i> game. Of all time	9.0 9.5 9.5	Gold
Super Monkey Ball Jr.	■ Amazingly, monkey balls don't quill smoothly on the handheld. Bravo, primate!	8.0 -- --	Silver
Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo	■ Quirky puzzle action from the <i>Street Fighter</i> crew. Now with fewer fireballs	7.5 9.0 9.0	Silver
Super Street Fighter II Turbo Revival	■ The 3D fighting legend ain't what it used to be on Game Boy Advance	7.0 6.0 7.0	
Tactics Ogre: The Knight of Lodis	■ The hardcore strategy series stays solid in its latest outing	8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	■ Even after ditching the carbon-shading gimmick, the turtles still can't escape shell shock	3.5 7.5 6.0	
Tekken	■ A better fighter than it has any right to be, but still not that great	5.0 6.5 6.0	
Tomb Raider: The Prophecy	■ <i>Angel of Darkness III</i> the bottom. <i>The Prophecy</i> is just part of the downward spiral	4.5 -- --	
Top Gear GT Championship	■ Like a <i>Daiatsu</i> Charade compared to the Testarossa that is <i>GT Advance</i>	3.5 5.0 4.5	
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	■ Sneaky, stealthy spy games in the palm of your hand	4.0 7.5 6.5	
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	■ Wow, a little skater in my GBA! A bit awkward, but radical fun	9.0 9.0 7.5	Silver
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	■ Activision fine-tuned its pseudo-3D skate park	8.5 -- --	Silver
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	■ Still <i>Tony Hawk</i> , still pretty good, but microscopic skating is starting to get old	7.5 -- --	
Wario Land 4	■ The further adventures of Nintendo's anthero, looking sharper on GBA	7.5 8.0 7.0	
Warrio Ware Inc.: Mega Microgame\$	■ Possibly the most addictive thing ever created. Besides <i>Tetris</i> . And <i>crack</i>	9.5 9.0 9.0	Gold
Wolfenstein 3D	■ Perfect port of the outdated original game	6.0 -- --	
X-Men: Reign of Apocalypse	■ The only mutant menace here in whoever bolted this license	3.0 -- --	
xXx	■ Three strikes—this lame platformer is out	5.5 -- --	
Yoshi's Island: Super Mario Advance 3	■ The apotheosis of 2D platforming. Play it now	9.0 9.0 9.5	Gold
Zone of the Enders: The Fist of Mars	■ Middling mecha-strategy with the pooliest character names in history	5.5 8.5 6.0	

PLAYSTATION

GAME	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Air Combat 2	■ The highly acclaimed sequel to Namco's arcade-style flight sim	9.0 8.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
Ape Escape	■ The amazing 3D action game that made capturing monkeys popular again	9.0 8.0 8.0 9.0	Silver
Blazing Dragons	■ The point-and-click adventure game with an all-star voice cast	8.5 7.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
Bushido Blade	■ 2D fighters didn't feature amputations before this inspired same-fist	8.0 7.0 7.5	
Bust-A-Move 2	■ No, not the follow-up to Young MC's hit song. It's more bubble-popping action	8.5 8.5 7.0 8.0	Silver
Castlevania: Symphony of the Night	■ Gamers' prayers were answered: a new 2D <i>Castlevania</i> . And what a version it is	9.5 9.0 9.0 9.5	Gold
Colony Wars	■ Only <i>Psychosis</i> could bring a sci-fi flight sim to the consoles and make it fun	9.5 9.5 9.5 8.5	Gold
Crash Bandicoot	■ Who would've guessed an American developer could make an action-platformer this good	8.5 8.5 8.3 8.0	Silver
Crash Team Racing	■ Heavily inspired by <i>Mario Kart</i> , but still an amazing multiplayer racer	9.5 9.5 8.5 10	Gold
Dragon Ball Z: Ultimate Battle 22	■ Don't play this fighter. Please. The "22" is the number of characters included	2.0 2.0 1.5 --	
Driver 2	■ A no-frills but still decent update. You can out your car now! Wow!	7.5 6.0 7.5 --	
Fade to Black	■ After a long nap, turns out those pesky aliens are still a nuisance	8.0 7.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
Fear Effect	■ Hot chicks and lesbian overtones	9.5 8.5 9.0 9.0	Gold
Final Fantasy Origins	■ The first two FFs, but with lush rehashed graphics. They made 'em hair back then	8.0 7.0 7.0 --	
Final Fantasy Tactics	■ Square's first entry in the strategy RPG genre. Uneven, but a classic	8.5 9.0 8.5 8.5	Silver
Final Fantasy VII	■ No two ways about it: <i>FFVII</i> beat the mold	9.5 9.5 9.5 8.5	Gold
Final Fantasy VIII	■ Tears in clam diggers save the world again. Doesn't have <i>FFVII</i> 's rep, though	9.5 9.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
Final Fantasy IX	■ Yet another outstanding <i>FF</i> sequel, this time with a return to its roots	10 9.5 9.5 --	Gold
Front Mission 3	■ Tactical mech battles and a story line that lasts over 125 hours	9.0 8.5 9.0 9.5	Gold
Gran Turismo	■ The first installment in the best racing-game series of all time	3.5 9.0 9.0 9.5	Gold
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone	■ Short and ugly adventuring. Harry says "Flendo!" hundreds of times before the end	4.5 6.5 6.0 --	
Hot Shots Golf 2	■ You don't have to be sporty to enjoy the best in <i>PlayStation</i> golf	3.0 9.5 8.5 8.5	Silver
Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver	■ A sprawling, horrific 3D action game starring a guy with a very weak chin	8.0 9.0 9.0 9.0	Silver
Lunar: Star Story Complete	■ A remake of the original RPG on Sega CD with a metric ton of bonus material	9.5 9.0 8.5 9.0	Gold
Marvel Super Heroes vs. Street Fighter	■ The best combination of geeky pastimes since the Internet and porn	8.0 7.5 7.0 7.5	
MediEvil II	■ Sir Dan and Friends have to solve puzzles and kill baddies once more	6.5 6.5 8.0 7.0	
Monster Rancher	■ Make your own booty-shakin' dance tracks right on your PlayStation	8.0 8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
MTV Music Generator	■ Make your own booty-shakin' dance tracks right on your PlayStation	0.0 8.0 7.5 8.5	Silver
Need for Speed: High Stakes	■ Put your high-priced cars on the line in this racing sequel	8.5 8.5 9.0 9.5	Gold
Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus	■ It's <i>Mudokoro</i> . <i>SoulStorm</i> brew is made out of <i>Mudokoro</i> ! You've gotta tell them!	0.0 9.0 9.5 9.5	Silver
Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee	■ <i>Out of This World</i> —style gameplay never looked so good	8.5 8.5 9.0 8.0	Silver
PaRappa the Rapper	■ Great! Now even dorky white gamers think they can rap	8.5 9.0 7.5 8.0	Silver
Point Blank	■ Grab gun, ready trigger finger, and go crazy. Japanese style. The best light-gun game ever	9.5 9.5 9.5 9.0	Gold

(SUSHI-X The silent but deadly assassin made his EGM debut in issue #12.)

PLAYSTATION

GAME	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Resident Evil	■ Fantastic game, but who can forget the terrible intro and dialogue	9.0 8.0 9.5 9.0	Gold
Resident Evil 2	■ Better than before, this sequel lets you take an Umbrella as Leon or Claire	8.5 9.0 9.5 8.5	Gold
Resident Evil 3: Nemesis	■ An RE side story starring Jill Valentine and a giant zombie named Nemesis	9.0 8.5 8.5 8.5	Silver
Silent Hill	■ Enough creepiness to make Christopher Walken uncomfortable	8.5 8.5 9.0 8.5	Silver
Soul Blade	■ This Namco fighter lets you use weapons to kick your opponent's ass	8.5 8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace	■ Was the game better than the movie? Yes, but barely	6.5 5.5 6.0 5.5	
Spyhon Filter	■ While tolerable at the time, should've been titled <i>Metal Gear Weep</i> . Try again, Sony	8.0 8.0 8.0 6.5	
Spyhon Filter 2	■ More of the same uninspired shooting	6.0 6.0 5.5 6.5	
Spyhon Filter 3	■ See above	6.5 6.5 6.5 --	
Tekken II	■ Blocky 3D brawler borrowed from Virtua Fighter to bring grade-A whoop ass to Sony's console	9.0 8.0 9.0 8.0	Silver
Tekken 3	■ The spectacular sequel that confirmed the hatred gamers felt for Paul	10 10 10 9.0	Gold
Tomb Raider	■ Lara Croft came and third-person 3D action-adventures haven't been the same since	9.5 9.5 9.5 9.0	Gold
Tomb Raider II	■ Tweaks to gameplay, visuals, and controls make this action-packed sequel a winner	9.5 8.0 9.0 9.5	Gold
Tomb Raider III	■ Globe-trotting Lara Croft gets new weapons and vehicles	7.5 5.0 7.5 7.5	
Tomb Raider: Chronicles	■ It should be illegal for you to own money if you even considered buying this crap	3.5 5.0 4.0 --	
Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation	■ We have a revelation for you: This game sucks	4.0 5.0 4.0 7.0	
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater	■ The spirit of skateboarding in game form. Truly amazing	7.5 9.0 9.0 8.0	Silver
Twisted Metal	■ Car combat back when it wasn't being exploited by Sony	9.0 9.5 9.0 9.0	Gold
Twisted Metal 2	■ Bigger arenas, badder weapons	9.5 8.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
Twisted Metal 3	■ A new developer drives the franchise right into the toilet...	6.0 5.0 5.0 5.5	
Twisted Metal 4	■ ...and then flushes for good measure	5.0 7.0 5.0 6.5	
Vagrant Story	■ A strategy role-playing game where the timing and placement of attacks means everything	9.5 9.0 9.0 --	Gold
Vandal Hearts	■ Final Fantasy Tactics-like role-playing strategy where you liberate an oppressed people	8.0 8.5 9.0 9.0	Silver
Xenogears	■ An extremely popular anime-style role-playing game of epic proportions	9.0 9.0 8.5 8.5	Silver

NINTENDO 64

GAME	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
100% Snowboarding	■ The same folks behind <i>Nitro Race</i> took the temperature down a few degrees	7.5 8.0 8.5 9.5	Silver
Banjo-Kazooie	■ Banjo-Kazooie is Banjo's heritage to <i>Mario 64</i> , only it's not quite as good	8.5 9.5 9.0 8.5	Gold
Beetle Adventure Racing	■ A racer in the vein of <i>San Francisco Rush</i> with tons of alterations	9.0 9.5 9.5 9.0	Gold
Blast Corps	■ It's like playing with explosives-laden Tonka trucks, with no mess to clean up afterwards	9.0 8.5 9.0 8.5	Silver
Castlevania	■ The first attempt to bring the Belmonts to 3D was, for its time, an excellent one	9.0 9.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Conker's Bad Fur Day	■ "We're misable!" No, you're not. You're just a fun action/shooter/juvenile-high simulator	7.5 8.5 --	Silver
Diddy Kong Racing	■ DKR looks better than <i>Mario Kart</i> , but it's a little too cutesy for us	9.0 8.5 9.5 9.0	Gold
Donkey Kong 64	■ It was fun for a while, but the constant item collecting had us going bananas	8.5 8.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
Excitebike 64	■ As fun as the original <i>Excitebike</i> (8-bit Nintendo), and it even has a custom track editor	8.5 9.0 --	Gold
F-Zero X	■ It might not look too hot, but <i>F-Zero X</i> is one hell of a racer	9.0 9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
GoldenEye 007	■ <i>GoldenEye</i> : Truly classic, late '90s college dorm room staple, and Rare's finest moment	9.5 9.5 9.0 9.0	Gold
Hey You, Pikachu!	■ The game where yelling in the television is actually productive	4.5 3.5 6.0 --	
Killer Instinct Gold	■ Unless Rare decides to resurrect <i>KI</i> for Xbox, this is the best you can do	7.0 6.0 8.5 8.0	
Kirby 64: The Crystal Shards	■ A short but sweet platformer that, unlike Kirby, definitely does not suck	9.0 7.5 8.5 --	Silver
Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask	■ Link's second N64 adventure is a little different, but that's why we love it	10 10 10 --	Platinum
Legend of Zelda: The Ocarina of Time	■ An epic adventure that is among the best N64 games	10 10 10 10	Platinum
Mario Kart 64	■ And on the eighth day, God created <i>Mario Kart</i> . He saw it, and it was good	9.0 9.5 9.5 9.0	Gold
Madden 64	■ Despite PlayStation's popularity, a few thousand holdouts played ball on N64	9.0 8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Mario Party	■ The game that would start a Mario-themed party-game revolution	8.5 8.5 8.5 9.0	Silver
Mario Tennis	■ Like most games with "Mario" in the title, it's good stuff	9.5 9.0 8.5 --	Gold
Mortal Kombat Trilogy	■ Released just as the craze was dying down, it didn't do much to keep people interested	8.0 8.0 8.5 8.0	Silver
Mystical Ninja	■ Mystical Ninja had a nation of young adults spiking and dying their hair. Or not	8.0 8.0 9.0 7.0	Silver
Perfect Dark	■ If <i>GoldenEye</i> is a bull's-eye, <i>Perfect Dark</i> hits somewhere in the lungs	10 10 9.5 --	Gold
Pilotwings 64	■ Take a self-guided tour of Little America—it's not every day you get to fly an autogyro	6.5 8.0 8.5 8.5	Silver
Pokémon Puzzle League	■ Based on the classic <i>Tetris Attack</i> , <i>Pokémon Puzzle League</i> is a highly addictive substance	9.0 9.5 9.0 --	Gold
Pokémon Snap	■ "OK, Bulbasaur, you're on the beach, you're happy... give me some Ironic, Bulby!"	8.5 8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Pokémon Stadium	■ Taking your favorite Pokémon to the big screen in full 3D? Do you even have to ask?	7.5 5.5 6.5 6.5	
Rayman 2: The Great Escape	■ From the unexpected-surprise department comes <i>Rayman 2</i> , an outstanding platformer	9.0 9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Ridge Racer 64	■ Nintendo's interpretation of Namco's signature racer is surprisingly good	8.0 8.0 7.5 8.5	Silver
Snowboard Kids	■ Look up "slasher hit" in the dictionary and you'll probably find a picture of <i>Snowboard Kids</i>	8.5 8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
Star Fox 64	■ A very pretty reprise of the original <i>Star Fox</i> story, but with new stuff	9.0 9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Star Wars: Episode I Racer	■ A speedy racer that reminds us that there were actually some good parts in <i>Episode I</i>	9.5 9.0 9.5 9.0	Gold
Star Wars: Rogue Squadron	■ For whatever reason, shooting down scores of Ties never, ever gets old	8.0 8.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire	■ The foot soldiers are skintight, but that's why they have a <i>knospewder</i> stage	8.5 9.0 9.0 7.0	
Super Mario 64	■ There'll never be another <i>Mario</i> game that will make the same impact as <i>Super Mario 64</i>	9.5 9.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
Super Smash Bros.	■ Grab three friends, then get ready for the best in multiplayer mayhem	8.5 8.5 9.0 9.0	Silver
Turok: Dinosaur Hunter	■ Acclaim's solid first-person shooter is heavy on the fog. It is atmospheric, though	7.0 5.5 8.0 7.0	

WORST BOX ART (cont.)

SUPER BUST-A-MOVI

PS2 — It would seem that Acclaim's marketing director couldn't resist putting his new baby on the cover of his company's next release. Gurgling, gurgling, who's a baby?



DEMON ATTACK

Atari 2600 — To think you'll need a *Demon Attack* box art, you'll need a Rubber dingsaur (preferably a Tyrannosaurus Rex), a Toy F-16 fighter jet, a glue or paste, and Silver spray paint.



CUSTER'S REVENGE

Atari 2600 — Neither Swedish nor erotic, but most definitely mysterious, *Custer's Revenge* seems to have inspired its a belated.



tricks of the trade

it's your game, and you'll cheat if you want to, cheat if you want to

trickster



Our love affair with large, bulky, slightly inebriated men continues with a thorough going-over of *Return of the King* and *Gladius*. We dole out key *Yu-Gi-Oh!* advice, offer tactics for *Tak*, fiddle with our *Ghoulies*, and even shred on the *SSX 3* slopes. Plus: top-notch codes for *GameShark* and *Action Replay!*

—David S. J. Hodgson
egm@ziffdavis.com

■ PS2, XB, GC

SSX 3

The pantaloons and snowboards are more stylish, the characters aren't voiced by the half-robotomized David "Cox" Arquette or Macy Gray any more, and now there's just one mountain. But what a mountain! This hill's so frickin' huge, there are simply dozens of Big Challenges to complete on it. Which is where we come in—we have a list of all the Big Challenges for you.

But before we launch into that, here's a quick tip on the cash you're collecting: You're awarded a certain amount of money for each Big Challenge completed, depending on the peak. Challenges on Peak 1 pay 2,000 clams each. Peak 2's challenges yield 4,000 dollars apiece. And each challenge on Peak 3 coughs up a whopping 6,000 bucks! That buys a lot of hot cocoa at the lodge.

Challenges marked "Once" on the chart can be done just one time, while "Multi" challenges can be completed up to three times, getting more difficult each time.



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Challenge Name	Type	Description
Peak 1		
Snow Jam		
Thread the Needles	Multi	Jump through hoops, perform a particular trick or combo, depending on the level
Point Challenge	Multi	Grab big points, depending on the level
Camel Backs	Once	Four grabs off of four rollers
Loop the Tunnel	Once	Ride the loop inside of the tunnel
What Sign?	Once	Knock over the billboard by grinding it
Speed Demon	Once	Race through the gates
Metro-City		
Warm-up Gates	Multi	Make all gates, then race against the clock in upper levels
Point Challenge	Multi	Big points on this race course
Flip Flop Fun	Once	Perform the called flip tricks
Grinding Tin	Once	Grind sequential rooftops
Crow's Nest		
Pop the Kitty	Multi	Pop balloon animals, nab points, and do the called tricks, depending on the level
Reach for the Sky	Multi	Increase a set distance into the air, which increases on each level
R&B		
Play It Safe	Multi	Get to the bottom with no wipeouts. In later levels, get to the bottom with no wipeouts while earning big points
Seek and Slide	Multi	Grind objects of varying difficulty
Time Challenge	Once	Get to the bottom as fast as possible
Tight Rope Artist	Once	Perform the called rail tricks
The Junction		
Brash Bash	Multi	Break various colored panes of glass
Happiness		
Stay Grounded	Once	Keep your total time in the air under eight seconds
Danger	Once	Avoid the falling ice
Dizzy Spells	Once	Perform the called spin tricks
Go Spelunking	Once	Find the items in the tunnels
Jump	Once	Fly through five hoops

■ PS2, GC

TAK AND THE POWER OF JUJU

Check our chart of button cheats for *Tak* to the right. That info will juice up your juju! Furthermore, platforming overachievers can collect more Nubu plants and Yorbels than they need to unlock some extras:

12 Magical Nubu Plants: Tak has to return nine Magical Nubu Plants to Jibolba for the Resurrection spell he must cast on Lok—but there are 12 of these fantastic flora in the game. If you collect all 12 Magical Nubu Plants, a concept-art gallery becomes available in the Extras menu.

200 Yorbels: You need 100 Yorbels for Lok's Resurrection spell, but there are 200 in the game. If you find all 200, you'll unlock the concept storyboards for Tak's adventure. You can view these storyboards whenever you wish from the Extras menu.

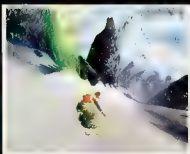
Cheat	Codes (enter at the Pause screen)
Unlock Cheat Menu	GC only: B, X, Y, Y, B, X, Y, Y
All Cinemas	GC only: Left, Right, B, B, X, X, Left, Right
All Plants	GC: B, Y, X, Left, Up, Right, Down, Down PS2: Square, Triangle, Circle, Left, Up, Right, Down, Down
All Yorbels	GC: Up, Y, Left, B, Right, X, Down, Up PS2: Up, Triangle, Left, Square, Right, Circle, Down, Up
All Moonstones	GC: Y, Y, B, B, X, X, Left, Right PS2: Triangle, Triangle, Square, Square, Circle, Circle, Left, Right
100 Feathers	GC: B, Y, X, B, Y, X, B, Y PS2: Square, Triangle, Circle, Square, Triangle, Circle, Square, Triangle
All Juju Power-ups	GC: Up, Right, Left, Down, Y, X, B, Down PS2: Up, Right, Left, Down, Triangle, Circle, Square, Down
Unlock Everything	PS2 only: Left, Right, Square, Square, Circle, Circle, Left, Right

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Challenge Name	Type	Description
Peak 2		
Ruthless Ridge		
Gate Masters	Multi	Make it through all gates
Point Challenge	Once	Earn 275,000 points on this course
Cherry Picker	Once	Grab the collectible way up high
Intimidator		
Just Gates	Multi	Make it through the gates, then beat the clock and get big points
Point Challenge	Once	Earn 300,000 points on this course
Missing Masonry	Once	Grind across the left side of the broken bridge
Launch Time		
Over the Top	Once	Jump over the rock ledge and do a spin
Big Tricks Warm-up	Multi	Perform the series of called tricks
Schizophrenia		
The Hoopsta	Multi	Fly through hoops of increasing difficulty
Style Mile		
Rail Wizardry	Multi	Grind the rails and do tricks, depending on the level
Target Practice	Once	Hit all of the targets
Time Challenge	Once	Beat the timer to the bottom
Ruthless		
Shoot the Hoops	Multi	A mixed bag of tricks and tasks
Yard Sale	Once	Help a skier pick up lost equipment
Ridge Runner	Once	Grind all five objects
Peak 3		
Gravitude		
Giant Slalom	Multi	Complete a variety of slalom challenges
Point Challenge	Once	Earn 350,000 points on this course
Kick Doubt		
Grinder	Multi	Perform grinds of set lengths
Play It Safe	Once	Earn 300,000 points with no wipeouts
Time Challenge	Multi	Beat the timer to the bottom
Much-2-Much		
No Wings Needed	Once	Get 23 seconds of air time
Popping Daddy	Multi	A mixed bag of tasks
Perpendicularous		
Trick Sergeant	Multi	Perform a variety of called tricks
The Throne		
Combat Training	Multi	Hit a set number of punching bags
New Line Collectibles	Once	Grab the Collectibles
Play It Safe	Once	Earn 250,000 points with no wipeouts



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■ PS2, XB, GC

GLADIUS

When you're hacking and slashing your way through the game, remember there's a purpose to your turn-based fracas: There's a load of secrets to unlock, including a variety of hairy beasts to locate and tame for your frivolous enjoyment.

The Hell's Gate Quest

Gladius has one final hidden league for those who have diligently completed the game's various shopkeeper quests. To open Hell's Gate, do the following:

- Earn the Signet of the Valkyrie from the first Mórdare's Den shopkeeper quest.
- Earn the Promise Stone from the Mysterious Tablet shopkeeper quest in Saraa Izel by reading the tablet Aziza gives you.
- Defeat Sarenenut in the final Saraa Izel shopkeeper quest.
- Raise at least six characters to level 18 or higher.

When you've completed all of the prerequisites, glowing lights will lead you to the tip of the Southern Expanse, where Usus will locate a hidden portal. When you enter, you'll be automatically enrolled in the Fulfill Your Promise league, a five-round wilderness battle that is perhaps the toughest challenge in the game. You will do battle with four summoners in the first four rounds and take on a reborn Sarenenut in the final battle.

Surviving characters will each learn the Hell's Fury skill, which Sarenenut demonstrates in the first round of the battle. This area-damage skill is by far the strongest attack in the game. Battles will be a breeze after you earn it. You'll also earn a few strange pieces of equipment: in Cognito, The Marksman, The Laughmaster, and No. 1 Fan.



Rare Recruits

Most of the 29 character classes in *Gladius* can easily be hired from the game's various recruitment offices. But a few require a bit of legwork first. Here's how to recruit members of the game's hardest-to-find classes:

Minotaur: To recruit a minotaur, you must enroll in the Historian's league in the Imperial city of Cro Beska. After you earn



the Mongrel Butcher badge, talk to the proprietor of the shop (Scotia) and he'll set up the Historian's league for seven days later. Return on that day, make sure you have an open slot in your school, and save the game. If you can beat the league, one of your opponents (chosen at random) will offer to join you. If you get a 50/50 shot at getting a minotaur. If you get a satyr instead, just reload your game and try again until a minotaur offers to join your school.

Scarabs and Scorpions: To recruit members of the game's final two beast classes, you need to conquer the Insect Ze league in Oaa Rah. After your victory, you will sometimes see scarabs and scorpions in the Oaa Rah recruiting office. Recruit away.

Summoner: After your battle in Oaa Rah, head toward Akar An to trigger an event scene, then enter the city of Akar An and recruit the game's only summoner in the Palace Ildis recruiting office.

Undead Legionnaires: After completing the first shopkeeper quest in Mórdare and attempting the Dead of Night league, return to the Dragonslayer and ask the shopkeeper how he's doing. He'll tell you about a nearby hill where the unalive prowls at night and then ask you to do something about it. Visit that hill after dark and defeat the skeleton-generating tombstones to earn the Tallisman of Unlife. Bring that to the gravestones elsewhere in the game (there is one on each continent), and an undead legionnaire will arise and join your school.

Undead Summoner: Recruiting an undead summoner is much easier. Visit Nordag's Mórdare's Den at night, complete the Dead of Night series league, and you'll get a message about a visitor in the recruiting office. Head down there and recruit Taithleach the undead summoner for free!

Yeti: There are two yetis that will fight for you, but only one will join your school permanently. To recruit him, clear the Trial of the Elders league in Vargen and then visit Vargen's recruiting office.

■ Xbox

GRABBED BY THE GHOULIES

By now, you know the word "ghoulies" over in Britain means *cojones* (except it's spelled "goolies"), but did you know that the striped-sweatered, personality-free hero of this saccharine horror romp has more than a set of family jewels to protect? Like secrets—and lots of 'em.

100 Rare Books

Every one of the game's 100 rooms has a rare bonus book to collect before you leave. Missed one? You can't go back until you finish the chapter! Ack! Remember to search for a book before you access in-game cinemas (since they sometimes sweep you to the next room without a pause for you to grab the book) and don't forget to grab a book each time you enter a room; a new one will appear each time. The Grand Hallway, for example, is entered nine times throughout the game and adds nine bonus books to your collection. If you missed a book, replay the chapter from the Features menu to get another chance to grab it.

Here's what your total should be after each chapter if you want all 100 books:

Chapter 1	12 bonus books
Chapter 2	52 bonus books
Chapter 3	86 bonus books
Chapter 4	87 bonus books
Chapter 5	100 bonus books

21 Challenges

Why the hell are you collecting dozens of blue bonus books? To unlock the first 20 extra challenges, that's why! Each



challenge is a minigame with a score to beat. Every five books you collect unlocks one challenge. Earn a gold or higher medal on all 20 challenges to access the insanity of the 21st challenge, in which you play the game again as Amber, with only 10 health and no soup! The reward for completing this section is so fantastic that we've been asked not to reveal it!

Platinum Power

Now, about these extra challenges. We've figured out the scores you need to collect bronze, silver, gold, and platinum medals for each challenge (see chart). As you can see, the platinum scores are sometimes maddeningly difficult! Keep at it, Cooper!

Ghouly Gallery

An interesting look into the production of the game, the Ghouly Gallery is your reward for earning platinum medals in challenges. Each time you earn one of those elusive medals, one page of the gallery is unlocked. Great! And finally, you'll receive a ranking at the end of the game, but don't fret if it's crappy. It doesn't unlock anything.

Challenge Score Requirements

#	Name	Bronze	Silver	Gold	Platinum
1	Billiard Room Bust-Up!	4	8	12	16
2	Bring Out the Imps!	12	24	36	48
3	Super-Duper Super Scary Shock!	3	6	9	12
4	Friday Night at the Embassy!	3	8	13	18
5	Soak-a-Zombie!	115	100	85	70
6	A Touch of Frost!	4	7	10	13
7	Poor Ol' Fiddlesworth!	15	30	45	60
8	Who's the Daddy?	1	3	5	7
9	Smash the Studly, Buddy!	3,500	6,000	8,500	11,000
10	Chop-Socky Whacky!	4	8	12	16
11	Amber Wants a Kiss!	105	85	65	45
12	Hey, Big Swinger!	2	5	8	11
13	Gone to Pott!	5	9	13	17
14	Kick 'Em Quick!	95	80	65	50
15	Take Out the Trash!	18	15	12	9
16	Dirty Laundry!	12	18	24	30
17	Catch the Cowards!	8	13	18	23
18	Bedtime Gory!	5	11	17	23
19	Who's Still the Daddy?	6	9	12	15
20	(Don't Fear) the Reaper!	25	40	55	70
21	Play It Again, Son!	—	—	—	Finish!



VS.

**NBA Jam (PS2)**Enter This First
F450BE1E 36744416**Exclusive! P1 Scores**

50 Per Basket
24D0A6AA D276C509
24D8A688 52748529
24D3A628 0275C51A
2459B608 1654C538
24D9B608 1654C588
2452A6A8 0676C5A8
24D1A6AC 5E74C59B
2451B608 5E7CC588
24C1BC3E 9F6EC0D2
24D2B4A8 9A57C529
24919568 10F651CC
24D193A8 2495D39D
24D011E8 80D5578D
0450B628 1674C508

Exclusive! P2 Scores

50 Per Basket
24D0A6AA D276C509
24D8A688 52748529
24D3A628 0275C51A
2459B608 1654C538
24D9B608 1654C588
2452A6A8 0676C5A8
24D1A6AC 5E74C59B
2451B608 5E7CC588
24C1BC3E 9F6EC0D2
24D2B4A8 9A57C529
24919568 10F651CC
24D193A8 2495D39D
24D011E8 80D5578D
0450B628 1674E508

Infinite Jam P1
24D193A8 2495D39D

Infinite Jam P2
24D011E8 80D5578D

Constant Hotspots
25101728 34F0C50C

No Hotspots
25101728 34F0C52C

Constant Fire
25101728 34F0C5BC

Infinite Turbo
25101528 34F0C51C

Boktai: The Sun Is in Your Hand (GBA)Enter This First
9D9CDF424060
473AB8552BC0
5BA1BC500F2C

Quick Health Refill
57107A65069C

Infinite Energy
86A9B212C108
0EE82558ED38

Infinite Horn Timer
FE103EC07B1
5D126FEE2DDC

Minimum Sunlight
[Press L + Left]
52111A853EED
B60821166C38

Maximum Sunlight
[Press L + Right]
529758F106ED
BE082D1F2C38

No Overheating
8E3BE03E038B

Have All Batteries
310600E5BF7F

Have All Lenses
314682B5136F
256592C5D166

Have All Frames
39060EBD077F
2D270EBD067F

Have All Grenades
253FD26469E6
8E82558ED38

Infinite Items
391A7E6F2CF6
120BE9742828

Have All Items
9B4CB4D802A
92C8B012D00B
862AE9742928

**P.N.03 (GC)**Enter This First
1 K0MR-7XVX-V63W6
2 FJ6G-NUTJ-439RW**Exclusive! Get Super**

Papillon Suit
1 TB0U-888U-HAHMG
2 NMRW-B4WP-PDRTK
3 YNZB-MX2F-0XZ37
4 8QZA-RKVV-PTG98
5 H177-0GKG-6N2HB

Exclusive! Gangly/Lanky

Vanessa Mode
1 71ZW-87RC-679Z3
2 3HWG-0Y7D-F5UYD

Infinite Health
1 325N-AGTC-8EEYK
2 NMRW-B4WP-PDRTK

Infinite Energy
1 MSJZ-13AR-7P1KF
2 TE0X-Y8QU-WZWO4

Max/Infinite Points
1 YHXC-KOAP-WP3QV
2 MNFX-FVAD-BB1NY

Infinite Continues
1 59XF-QUK3-68069
2 J69D-0X2J-NM817

Get All Suits
1 3FEA-NA2T-K5AFE
2 BFE6-5GDG-WMHAK
3 QH25-R584-26FY3



■ The ambulance is already on the way.

Backyard Wrestling (PS2)Enter This First
0E3C7DF21853E9E
EE903F0ABC075A6A**Exclusive! Stun P2**

CEA205C4BCA99D3B

Infinite Health P1
DEA23826BCA9A447

75% Health P1
DEA23826BCA9A447
CEA23826BCA9A2D6

50% Health P1
0EA23826BCA9A447
CEA23826BCA99F65

25% Health P1
0EA23826BCA9A447
CEA23826BCA99D04

Infinite Health P2
DEA20FE6BCA9A447

75% Health P2
0EA20FE6BCA9A447
DEA20FE6BCA9A2D6

50% Health P2
0EA20FE6BCA9A447
DEA20FE6BCA99F65

25% Health P2
0EA20FE6BCA9A447
DEA20FE6BCA99D04

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■ PS2, XB, GC

LORD OF THE RINGS: RETURN OF THE KING

One code list to rule them all, and in the darkness, blind them. Your Trickster has developed a permanent squint compiling the comprehensive code list in the gargantuan table below. To use these codes:

1. Pause the game so the Options menu appears.
2. On PS2, hold down L1, L2, R1, and R2. On Xbox and GameCube, hold down L and R.
3. Enter the code with shoulder buttons still depressed.
4. After you've entered the code correctly, you'll hear a sound that indicates success.
5. If you want to enter more than one code, release the shoulder buttons, then hold them down again before entering another code.

In the secret codes chart, some codes are listed as "on/off" and some as "immediate." Enter an on/off code once to engage an effect, then enter it again to disable the effect. Immediate codes grant a bonus but don't change the game's rules. Many of them can be entered multiple times (such as "+1,000 Experience Points" and "Restore Missiles").

Be careful with these codes. Like the One Ring, their power can corrupt even the purest heart. You might want to try slaying those orcs fair and square before you punch in the "Invulnerability" and "Perfect Mode" codes, removing all the challenge from the game. An unchallenging beat-em-up can be pretty boring, even in Middle-earth. Right, that's enough talk—on with the chart!

Code	Usage	Character	PlayStation 2 Code	Xbox Code	GameCube Code
+1,000 Experience Points	Immediate	Aragorn	Up, Squ, Tri, X	Up, X, Y, A	B, B, Y, A
+1,000 Experience Points	Immediate	Faramir	Squ, Tri, Up, Squ	X, Y, Up, X	B, Y, Up, B
+1,000 Experience Points	Immediate	Frodo	Down, Tri, Up, Down	Down, Y, Up, Down	X, Y, Up, X
+1,000 Experience Points	Immediate	Gandalf	Cir, Tri, Up, Down	B, Y, Up, Down	X, Y, Up, X
+1,000 Experience Points	Immediate	Gimli	Cir, Cir, Tri, X	B, B, Y, A	X, X, X, A
+1,000 Experience Points	Immediate	Legolas	X, Tri, Up, X	A, Y, Up, A	A, Y, Up, A
+1,000 Experience Points	Immediate	Merry	Down, Down, Squ, X	Down, Down, X, A	X, X, B, A
+1,000 Experience Points	Immediate	Pippin	Tri, X, Squ, X	Y, A, X, A	Y, A, B, A
+1,000 Experience Points	Immediate	Sam	Tri, X, Down, X	Y, A, Down, A	Y, A, X, A
Level 2 Skills	On/off	Aragorn	Cir, Tri, X, Tri	B, Y, A, Y	X, Y, A, Y
Level 2 Skills	On/off	Faramir	X, Squ, X, Down	A, X, A, Down	A, B, A, X
Level 2 Skills	On/off	Frodo	Tri, Up, Down, Cir	Y, Up, Down, B	Y, Up, X, X
Level 2 Skills	On/off	Gandalf	Down, Tri, X, Tri	Down, Y, A, Y	X, Y, A, Y
Level 2 Skills	On/off	Gimli	Up, Cir, Squ, Squ	Up, B, X, X	Up, X, B, B
Level 2 Skills	On/off	Legolas	Squ, Squ, Cir, Squ	X, X, B, X	B, X, B, B
Level 2 Skills	On/off	Merry	Cir, Down, Squ, Squ	Down, Down, X, X	X, X, B, B
Level 2 Skills	On/off	Pippin	Down, X, Down, Up	Down, A, Down, Up	X, A, X, Up
Level 2 Skills	On/off	Sam	Cir, X, Cir, Tri	B, A, B, Y	X, A, X, Y
Level 4 Skills	On/off	Aragorn	Down, Squ, Cir, Squ	Down, X, B, X	X, B, X, B
Level 4 Skills	On/off	Faramir	X, X, Squ, Squ	A, A, X, X	A, A, B, B
Level 4 Skills	On/off	Frodo	Tri, Up, Cir, Down	Y, Up, B, Down	Y, Up, X, X
Level 4 Skills	On/off	Gandalf	Tri, Up, Squ, X	Y, Up, X, A	Y, Up, B, A
Level 4 Skills	On/off	Gimli	Tri, Squ, Down, Up	Y, X, Down, Up	Y, B, X, Up
Level 4 Skills	On/off	Legolas	Down, Down, X, X	Down, Down, A, A	X, X, A, A
Level 4 Skills	On/off	Merry	Squ, X, Cir, Down	X, A, B, Down	B, A, X, X
Level 4 Skills	On/off	Pippin	X, Down, Down, Down	A, Down, Down, Down	A, X, X, X
Level 4 Skills	On/off	Sam	Up, Down, Squ, X	Up, Down, X, A	Up, X, B, A
Restore Missiles	Immediate	Aragorn	Tri, Squ, Squ, Tri	Y, X, X, Y	Y, B, B, Y
Restore Missiles	Immediate	Faramir	Tri, Up, X, X	Y, Up, A, A	Y, B, Up, A
Restore Missiles	Immediate	Frodo	Tri, Tri, Tri, Cir	Y, Y, Y, B	Y, Y, Y, X
Restore Missiles	Immediate	Gandalf	Tri, Down, X, Squ	Y, Down, A, X	Y, X, A, B
Restore Missiles	Immediate	Gimli	Cir, Cir, Cir, X	B, B, B, A	X, X, X, A
Restore Missiles	Immediate	Legolas	Tri, Tri, Tri, Down	Y, Y, Y, Down	Y, Y, Y, X
Restore Missiles	Immediate	Merry	Squ, Cir, Cir, Tri	X, B, B, Y	B, X, X, Y
Restore Missiles	Immediate	Pippin	Up, Cir, Down, Squ	Up, B, Down, X	Up, X, X, B
Restore Missiles	Immediate	Sam	X, X, Cir, X	A, A, B, A	A, A, X, A
Unlock 3-Hit Combo	On/off	Aragorn	Squ, Down, Cir, Up	X, Down, B, Up	B, X, X, Up
Unlock 3-Hit Combo	On/off	Faramir	Squ, Tri, Up, Tri	X, Y, Up, Y	B, Y, Up, Y
Unlock 3-Hit Combo	On/off	Frodo	Squ, Down, Tri, Squ	X, Down, Y, X	B, X, Y, B
Unlock 3-Hit Combo	On/off	Gandalf	Down, X, Tri, Down	Down, A, Y, Down	X, A, Y, X
Unlock 3-Hit Combo	On/off	Gimli	Up, Squ, Cir, Squ	Up, X, B, X	Up, B, X, B
Unlock 3-Hit Combo	On/off	Legolas	Squ, Tri, Tri, Cir	X, Y, Y, B	B, Y, Y, X
Unlock 3-Hit Combo	On/off	Merry	Tri, X, Up, Tri	Y, A, Up, Y	Y, A, Up, Y
Unlock 3-Hit Combo	On/off	Pippin	Up, Up, Squ, Cir	Up, Up, X, B	Up, Up, B, X
Unlock 3-Hit Combo	On/off	Sam	Squ, X, Cir, Squ	X, A, B, X	B, A, X, B
Unlock Secret Character	Immediate	Frodo	Tri, Cir, Cir, Cir	Y, B, B, B	Y, X, X, X
All Experience You Get, Your Buddy Gets	On/off	Co-op	Down, X, X, X	Down, A, A, A	X, A, A, A

Code	Usage	Character	PlayStation 2 Code	Xbox Code	GameCube Code
All Health You Get, Your Buddy Gets	On/off	Co-op	Tri, Up, Squ, Squ	Y, Up, X, X	Y, Up, B, B
Level 6 Skills	On/off	Aragorn	Cir, Tri, Squ, Squ	B, Y, X, X	X, Y, B, B
Level 6 Skills	On/off	Faramir	Tri, X, Down, Cir	Y, A, Down, B	Y, A, X, X
Level 6 Skills	On/off	Frodo	Down, Down, X, Tri	Down, Down, A, Y	X, X, A, Y
Level 6 Skills	On/off	Gandalf	Tri, Tri, X, Up	Y, Y, A, Up	Y, Y, A, Up
Level 6 Skills	On/off	Gimli	Down, Tri, Down, Squ	Down, Y, Down, X	X, Y, X, B
Level 6 Skills	On/off	Legolas	Down, Cir, Up, Down	Down, B, Up, Down	X, X, Up, X
Level 6 Skills	On/off	Merry	Down, Down, Squ, Tri	Down, Down, X, Y	X, X, B, Y
Level 6 Skills	On/off	Pippin	Cir, Tri, Cir, Tri	B, Y, B, Y	X, Y, X, Y
Level 6 Skills	On/off	Sam	Down, Down, Up, Up	Down, Down, Up, Up	X, X, Up, Up
Level 8 Skills	On/off	Aragorn	Up, Squ, Tri, Up	Up, X, Y, Up	Up, B, Y, Up
Level 8 Skills	On/off	Faramir	Cir, Down, Down, Down	B, Down, Down, Down	X, X, X, X
Level 8 Skills	On/off	Frodo	Cir, Cir, Down, Down	B, B, Down, Down	X, X, X, X
Level 8 Skills	On/off	Gandalf	Cir, Squ, Down, Down	B, X, Down, Down	X, B, X, X
Level 8 Skills	On/off	Gimli	X, Cir, Down, Squ	A, B, Down, X	A, X, X, B
Level 8 Skills	On/off	Legolas	Squ, Up, Up, Down	X, Up, Up, Down	B, Up, Up, X
Level 8 Skills	On/off	Merry	Down, Tri, X, Squ	Down, Y, A, X	X, Y, A, B
Level 8 Skills	On/off	Pippin	Squ, Up, Up, Cir	X, Up, Up, B	B, Up, Up, X
Level 8 Skills	On/off	Sam	Cir, Cir, Tri, Tri	B, B, Y, Y	X, X, Y, Y
Unlock 4-Hit Combo	On/off	Aragorn	Up, Squ, Tri, Down	Up, X, Y, Down	Up, B, Y, X
Unlock 4-Hit Combo	On/off	Faramir	X, Squ, Up, X	A, X, Up, A	A, B, Up, A
Unlock 4-Hit Combo	On/off	Frodo	B, Squ, Down, Cir	Down, X, Down, Down	X, B, X, X
Unlock 4-Hit Combo	On/off	Gandalf	Down, Tri, Up, Cir	Down, Y, Up, B	X, Y, Up, X
Unlock 4-Hit Combo	On/off	Gimli	Tri, Squ, Up, X	Y, X, Up, A	Y, B, Up, A
Unlock 4-Hit Combo	On/off	Legolas	X, Cir, Tri, Squ	A, B, Y, X	A, X, Y, B
Unlock 4-Hit Combo	On/off	Merry	Squ, X, Squ, Squ	X, A, X, X	B, A, B, B
Unlock 4-Hit Combo	On/off	Pippin	X, X, Down, Cir	A, A, Down, B	A, A, X, X
Unlock 4-Hit Combo	On/off	Sam	Up, Down, Tri, Tri	Up, Down, Y, Y	Up, X, Y, Y
Unlock All Actor Interviews	Immediate	Special Features	X, Squ, X, Up	A, X, A, Up	A, B, A, Up
Unlock Secret Character	Immediate	Faramir	X, X, Tri, Tri	A, A, Y, Y	A, A, Y, Y
Unlock Secret Character	Immediate	Frodo	Cir, Squ, Squ, X	B, X, X, A	X, B, B, A
Unlock Secret Character	Immediate	Merry	X, Down, Down, X	A, Down, Down, A	A, X, X, A
Unlock Secret Character	Immediate	Pippin	Tri, Cir, Squ, Down	Y, B, X, Down	Y, X, B, X
Unlock Special Abilities	On/off	Aragorn	Down, Cir, Tri, Tri	Down, B, Y, Y	X, X, Y, Y
Unlock Special Abilities	On/off	Faramir	Up, Squ, Cir, Up	Up, X, B, Up	Up, B, X, Up
Unlock Special Abilities	On/off	Frodo	Tri, X, Down, X	Y, A, Down, A	Y, A, X, A
Unlock Special Abilities	On/off	Gandalf	Up, Down, Tri, Cir	Up, Down, Y, B	Up, X, Y, X
Unlock Special Abilities	On/off	Gimli	Cir, Squ, X, Cir	B, X, A, B	X, B, A, X
Unlock Special Abilities	On/off	Legolas	Tri, Cir, X, Cir	Y, B, A, B	Y, X, A, X
Unlock Special Abilities	On/off	Merry	Up, Tri, Cir, Cir	Up, Y, B, B	Up, Y, X, X
Unlock Special Abilities	On/off	Pippin	Squ, X, Cir, Tri	X, A, B, Y	B, A, X, Y
Unlock Special Abilities	On/off	Sam	Up, Cir, X, Cir	Up, B, A, B	Up, X, A, X
Infinite Co-op Resawns	On/off	All	Cir, Squ, Up, Cir	B, X, Up, B	X, B, Up, X
All Upgrades	Immediate	All	Up, Down, Tri, Squ	Up, Down, Y, X	Up, X, Y, B
Always Devastating	On/off	All	Tri, Up, Tri, Down	Y, Up, Y, Down	Y, Up, Y, X
Infinite Missiles	On/off	All	Squ, Squ, Down, Cir	X, X, Down, B	B, B, X, X
Invulnerability	On/off	All	Squ, Cir, Squ, Up	X, B, X, Up	B, X, B, Up
Perfect Mode	On/off	All	Cir, Down, Tri, X	B, Down, Y, A	X, X, Y, A
Targeting Indicator Mode	On/off	All	Down, Cir, Up, Squ	Down, B, Up, X	X, X, Up, B
Restore Health	Immediate	All	Squ, Squ, Cir, Cir	X, X, B, B	B, B, X, X

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YU-GI-OH!: THE FALSEBOUND KINGDOM

Monsters in the *Yu-Gi-Oh!* universe are not just static creatures—they can change to newer, more powerful forms. A clever duelist with the right card combinations can take a fairly plain deck and, through the fine art of fusion, turn it into an unstoppable force within just a few turns.

To fuse monsters together on the battlefield, you must have a supply of Polymerization, which can be bought from certain traders or can sometimes be found after a successful campaign. One Polymerization takes up one space in a monster's personal inventory. Each Polymerization can be used only once per campaign.

If you create a team with the correct duo or trio of monsters and throw a Polymerization into the mix at the right time, you can smartly extend the round by creating a fearsome monster with a brand-new health bar and a full supply of AP. You had better learn which monsters you can fuse, because the computer-controlled Marshals do not hesitate to use their complete encyclopedia of fusion knowledge.

Fusion Monsters

Here is a complete list of the monsters that can be fused in *Falsebound Kingdom*. Your first time through the game, you can't collect all the necessary monsters to create all these fusions, but if you continue with the same save file after you've finished the game once, playing through a second or third time, you'll eventually piece together the required monsters.

Skull Dragon: Summoned Skull and Red-Eyes Black Dragon form this fused monster.

Blue-Eyes Ultimate Dragon: Once Kaiba clears the Dragon Lair campaign, the three magnificent Blue-Eyes White Dragons—Azrael, Ibris, and Djibril—can fuse to become this tremendously powerful dragon.

Chimera the Flying Mythical Beast: Gazelle the King of the Mythical Beasts and Berfomet fuse to form this fierce monster.

Cosmo Queen: This powerful combination consists of a Dark Elf and a Mystical Elf.

Crimson Sunbird: You need a Mavelus and a Wing Eagle to create the Crimson Sunbird, a winged supermonster whose attacks cannot be blocked.

Gaia the Dragon Champion: Gaia the Fierce Knight and Curse of Dragons create Gaia the Dragon Champion. The fused monster launches attacks that cannot be dodged.



Gate Guardian: Fuse Kazekin, Suljin, and Sanga of the Thunder to create a huge monster with more AP than all three combined.

Meteor B. Dragon: Kaiba collects the Meteor Dragon in the Dragon Lair campaign. Fuse Meteor Dragon with Red-Eyes B. Dragon to form an even stronger monster.

Rebld Horseman: Place a Mythical Horseman and Battle Ox on the same team to create this frighteningly strong fusion monster.

Thousand Dragon: The Baby Dragon and Time Wizard aren't exactly the most potent monsters on the battlefield, but their fused form, Thousand Dragon, is a mighty combatant.

Twin-Headed Thunder Dragon: Fuse the Two-Headed King Rex and Thunder Dragon to form this formidable fused dragon.

Valkyrior the Magna Warrior: You must collect all three Magnet Warriors—Alpha, Beta, and Gamma—to create this fusion, which has very strong attacks.

Class Change

In addition to fusing monsters, you can use certain items on specific monsters to force them to change into different forms. You can perform these class changes only from the Team Make Up screen, not during the actual campaigns.

Armored Zombie: Zanki becomes this horrific undead soldier when you use Call of the Grave on it.

Dragon Zombie: Use Call of the Grave on the Crawling Dragon to create this undead reptile warrior.

Gaia the Dark Knight: The Black Luster Ritual transforms Gaia the Fierce Knight into this dark form. (Note that this changed Gaia the Dark Knight can no longer fuse with Curse of Dragons.)

Magician of Black Chaos: The Black Luster Ritual turns the Dark Magician into its more powerful form.

Metaltzoe: Use Metalmorph on Zoia to create this stronger, slower monster.

Perfectly Ultimate Great Moth: Use the Cocoon of Evolution on a Larvae Moth to create this far more powerful beast.

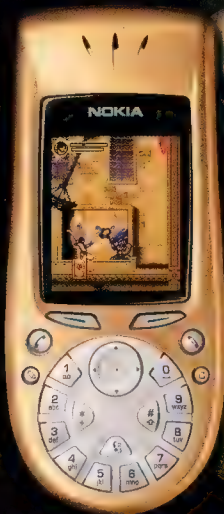
Red-Eyes Black Metal Dragon: Use Metalmorph on the Red-Eyes B. Dragon to create this metallic dragon.

THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES

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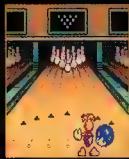
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THE INDEPENDENT GUIDE TO TECHNOLOGY

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- One (1) character skin* created based on their likeness for possible use in an upcoming **Game Boy® Advance** version of *The Sims™* game

One (1) *The Sims™ Bustin' Out* T-shirt

One (1) copy of *The Sims™ Bustin' Out* game for **Game Boy® Advance**

Ten (10) third place prize winners will each receive:

- One (1) copy of *The Sims™ Bustin' Out* game for **Game Boy® Advance**

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GAME BOY ADVANCE

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VICIOUS HINDSIGHT

Today, on a very special episode of **Rest of the Crap**, we take a sobering look at the past



Back in ye olde days of videogame journalism, reviewers were still blazing the trails of what we now call "standards" and "good taste."

Admittedly, it was tough for those guys to judge the

finer points of level design and gameplay when the very concept of flashing lights and moving pictures set them all a-tingle. So, for this special edition of *The Rest of the Crap*, EGM asked me to leaf through 173 old issues in search of classic games to re-review using today's modern sensibilities (and my uncanny ability to notice when a game about coloring is utterly retarded).

As the smartest among you already know, the laws of space-time make it clear that once a videogame review is a part of history, there's no

changing it. However, I'm confident that the universe will make an exception in the following cases of extreme reviewing error. And if I'm wrong, it's not like you'll have a long time to be mad at me before the death beasts pour out of the hole this magazine is about to tear in reality.

Regardless of how the death beast thing plays out, some readers may be even more alarmed to see that I've taken a couple liberties with EGM's mom-tested, nerd-lunchtable-approved scoring system. But you know, there are certain moments in life when a boy becomes a man. For me, it happened in the backseat of an AMC Pacer at the '82 World's Fair in Knoxville. For you, it may happen on the next page when your brain gives up and calls an armistice with the image of a troll riding America's most phallic snackfood. Emerge from the chrysalis, my little pupae. No one can hurt you now.

—Seanbaby



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LITTLE NICKY

Game Boy Color • Ubisoft • EGM #139 — In its original review, this game got more compliments than a fat girl at a pie-eating contest. Far away from this review, in a place I like to call reality, *Little Nicky* is a lethargic platformer with generic graphics, beeps for a soundtrack, and sloppy control. There are genital diseases you'd rather get for Christmas than this game.

Original Review Excerpt: "Nicky moves with the grace of a hand-drawn cartoon, and the environments he traverses are filled with intricate details (hell never looked so terrific). Equally impressive is the quality of the audio—there's generous helpings of voice samples, and the heavy-

metal soundtrack of the movie is capably emulated."

New Review: Originally, this game got a very strong 8.5, but in the reviewer's defense, he probably wasn't prepared for it. When you go from playing hundreds of normal games to a disaster based on an Adam Sandler movie, it's understandable that something in your head pops. In contrast, I reviewed *Little Nicky* between *Rainbow Brite Racing* and *Mary-Kate and Ashley's Bra-Removing Showdown*, so I was in a state of mind capable of giving this wretched game the score it richly deserves.

8.5 0.5

OLD SCORE NEW SCORE



THE LAWNMOWER MAN

Super Nintendo • THQ • EGM #55 — Some historians from the horrifying future year of 2023 have complained that the release of this film was the exact point in time when retarded people got the idea to take over the world. Luckily, the videogame version skips over most of the film's plot and gets right to the part where Pierce Brosnan and Jenny Wright fight off 3,000 army men with laser guns. It plays a lot like *Contra*—if *Contra* sucked and were loosely based on lawn mowers and special education.

Original Review Excerpt: "Well, the movie wasn't the greatest, and this game pretty much follows suit. The graphics are average but still OK, and the sound

isn't the greatest, but the virtual reality sequences are eye-grabbing and must be seen."

New Reviews: There was a time when I also would have given *The Lawnmower Man* a high score, but now that my mind has exponentially expanded by actually playing it (which is startlingly similar to being reeducated by a magical virtual-reality brain hat), I give it a zero. A zero that I'm more than happy to illustrate by levitating the cartridge with my mind and using it to punch a zero-shaped hole through all nearby skulls.

8.0 0.0

OLD SCORE NEW SCORE



PUTT-PUTT JOINS THE PARADE

3DO • Humongous • EGM #54—Since this is a kids' point-and-click adventure game, clicking on objects doesn't put them in your inventory for use later in dumb puzzles. Instead, clicking on an object makes all hell break loose. Click an apple and it will jump from the tree, break-dance, and then explode. Click a flower and it will spin around and make out with a mushroom. None of it helps you get any further in the game, but according to the original reviewers, it is "educational."

Original Review Excerpt: "You may call me insane, but I can spend hours watching this one. *Putt-Putt* is perfect for all ages, though the blood mongers will probably ignore it. So far it's the best for the 3DO.

Who'd have thought that a little car could be more fun than shooting down gunfighters?"

New Review: This game claims to be for ages 3 to 8, yet all of the reviewers admitted to getting sucked in by its delightful noises and moving objects. Granted, if you know an infant who owns a 3DO, it might have more fun with *Putt-Putt* than it would chasing a string, but not if it's a string that makes noises. If you're making sense out of the letters on this page and it's not being used to wipe spit off your chin, consider *Putt-Putt*'s score a 1.0.

8.0 1.0
OLD SCORE NEW SCORE



PINK PANTHER GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

Sega Genesis • TecMagik • EGM #52—As far as side-scrolling action games starring cartoon cats go, *Pink Panther Goes to Hollywood* is actually in the top 60 percent. One reviewer inadvertently put that dubious achievement into perspective when he called the game "a good alternative for people who really liked the *Chester Cheetah* game." That being said, if you really liked *Chester Cheetah*, you'd be perfectly happy with a game that gets a running start out of your Sega Genesis and rams itself up your body cavity.

Original Review Excerpt: "Well, it was probably only a matter of time until this guy showed his pink puss in videogames, but now he is here and he is

rather pleasant to play! The graphics are surprisingly good, plus the sound adequately conveys the mood of each level."

New Review: The first time around, EGM gave this dull pink mess the kid-gloves treatment, handing out 7's like they were going out of style. So, in order to reduce the average score to a reasonable level, I'm going to give the game a -16 and report that *Pink Panther Goes to Hollywood* and *Putt Putt Joins the Parade* were seen passionately kissing at *Bugs Bunny's Crazy Castle*.

7.0 -16
OLD SCORE NEW SCORE



SUPER TROLL ISLAND

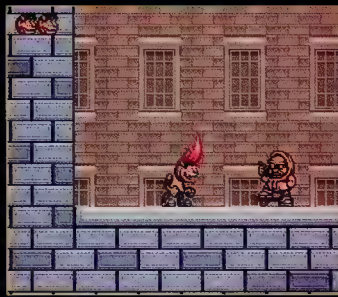
Super Nintendo • Amerisoft • EGM #53—In this game, you are a hideous troll doll who must color black-and-white backgrounds. Maybe I'm just being too much of an art snob, but I thought that the concept of coloring things was already a little played out by my *Dukes of Hazzard* activity book. And while the first reviewers acknowledged that the trolls' speed is dangerous, that hardly does justice to how out of control these creepy little bastards are. Trying to finish coloring a level is like attaching a paint bucket and a jet engine to an ugly baby and throwing it into an elevator.

Original Review Excerpt: "Whoa! Wait a minute. This is an interesting concept (turning black and

white lands into color), but the incredibly fast speed at which you travel leads to many unintentional errors—like running into enemies!"

New Review: The old reviewers handed out some seemingly high scores to, well, what boils down to a game about troll dolls and coloring. Looking back now, it's obvious that the reviewers were just being sarcastic and postmodern. Way to go, guys—you really fooled us! But now, the fun's over. I'm going to take a no-nonsense approach to this and give it the score of Troll Riding a Hot Dog.

7.0
OLD SCORE NEW SCORE



ROCKY RODENT

Super Nintendo • Irem • EGM #50—If you're looking for a platformer that will confront you with visions of your own mortality, you've found your suicide assistant in *Rocky Rodent*. Here, you're some rat mascot thing in sneakers who uses his carefully constructed "tude and an elderly woman's idea of outrageous hairdos to fight enemies. It's such a failure, you can actually hear the marketing committee's grand plans for the *Rocky Rodent* animated series and hair-flavored breakfast cereal cracking apart as you plod through the levels.

Original Review Excerpt: "The latest whizzin' whirlwind critter for the Super NES! This one can get in some hair-raising situations—literally! Not only

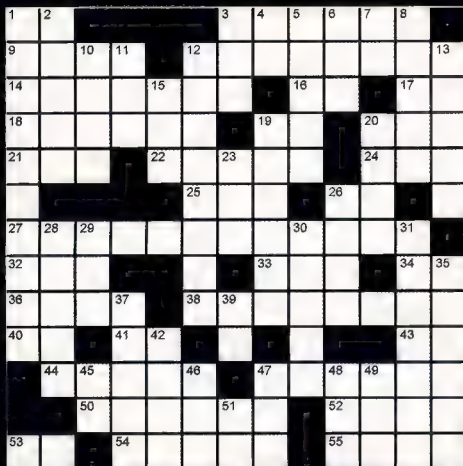
can *Rocky Rodent* quickly run and jump, but he can use a variety of hair styles for attacks! These include a whip-like ponytail, a boomerang mohawk, a sword spiky top and even a giant spring! Hair-raising!"

New Review: After suffering through a few hours of *Rocky Rodent* pain, I was fully prepared to give it a score of negative zero. But after rereading the original exclamation-point-filled, hair-raising review—where it's described as hair-raising twice—I got caught up in the hair-raising fever! One hundred points! It's totally hair-raising!

8.0 100
OLD SCORE NEW SCORE

STOCKING STUFFERS

(Solution on page 204)



ACROSS

1. *Project Gotham Racing* competitor? (abbrv.)
2. *Final Fantasy VII* party member
3. *Pirates of the Caribbean* (PS2) greeting
4. Nintendo handhelds
5. *Castlevania's* perennial female bosses
6. Computer-controlled characters, for short
7. D, L as directions on a 3D world map
8. Rapper with a delayed PS1 game in the works
9. Flip-top Game Boy
10. *Simpsons Hit & Run* barkeep
11. Thieves' hideout in *Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly* (PS2, GC)
12. Like *Street Fighter* Urien's Reflector
13. Number of lives you get in *NES Rygar*
14. *Pocket Fighter* was this kind of fighter in Japan
15. *Project Gotham 2* Camaro type
16. Pricy NEC portable
17. What Mario does a lot in *Yoshi's Island*
18. As furry fugitives, you're "on" this in *Whiplash*
19. Company that produced one of the first home-gaming computers (abbrv.)
20. Popular woodwind instrument in RPG soundtracks
21. What to do with a hooked fish in *Sega Bass Fishing* (three words)
22. Mother Brain, for short?
23. NES *Pro-Am* cars
24. Sega CD sleeper thriller featuring Dana Plato, for short
25. Handheld Genesis
26. What to do if your GBA SP's runnin' low
27. Speedy TVR car model in *Project Gotham 2*
28. Waterside setting in *Splinter Cell* and *Kill Switch*
29. GBA-style battery
30. Like the American Neo Geo Pocket screen
31. Steve Scott's line of work in *GTA: Vice City*

DOWN

1. Failed black-and-white handheld
2. Trademark song from a widescreen score
3. *UFO Troop's* Rutten
4. Not a good time for Dracula to be out of bed
5. Collects crops in *Harvest Moon* (NG4)
6. Tengen's NES *Baseball*
7. *Capcom* vs *SNK* iteration
8. According to Nintendo, he can be reached at 007-373-5963
9. *Final Fantasy* one-hit killer
10. *Street Fighter III* newcomer
11. Sega portable
12. Like *Resident Evil* NES precursor *Home*
13. Where you spend most of your time in *Zelda: Wind Waker*
14. Like a beginner difficulty level
15. *NFL 2K4* Viking
16. Former Crystal Dynamics' spokesperson
17. Drive one in *18 Wheeler*
18. Like NES *Champion* or GBC *Yeti*
19. *King of Fighters* fireballer
20. *Odyssey* developer Baer
21. Like a *Metal Gear Solid 2* missile
22. Any Wong's Planet Express position in *Futurama* (PS2)
23. *Mortal Kombat 3* knock-off ninja
24. Like PS2's *Deus*
25. *SOCOM* wardrobe, for short
26. *MLB 2004* extra innings (abbrv.)
27. *Madden 2004's* Miami team (abbrv.)
28. *GTA2* primary target
29. STANG for software, sometimes "killer"
30. *Driver II* South American city setting
31. *Kameo* PS2, Xbox, and GC military shooter, for short



WIN A TRIP TO MIDDLE-EARTH!

New Zealand's breathtaking backcountry provided the setting for all three *Lord of the Rings* flicks. So why not check it out for yourself...on our tab! To celebrate the upcoming *The Return of the King* game and movie, *Electronic Gaming Monthly* and *Electronic Arts* are teaming up to offer a trip for two to this real-life Middle-earth. Just go to <http://lotrcontest.egmmag.com> and answer three simple questions based on the game (check out last issue's cover story for the inside scoop). And don't grovel like Gollum if you don't win the grand prize—we're also giving away precious copies of the game.

GRAND PRIZE (ONE WINNER)

A trip for two to New Zealand (includes round-trip airfare and hotel accommodations)

RUNNER-UP PRIZES (40 FOR EACH PLATFORM)

Electronic Arts' *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* game for PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube, and Game Boy Advance

HOW TO PLAY

1. Log on to the contest page at <http://lotrcontest.egmmag.com>.
2. Answer all three questions correctly to complete the entry form.

All correct entries received by January 15, 2004, will then be entered into a drawing for the prizes. Only one entry per person is accepted.

Full legal rules available at <http://lotrcontest.egmmag.com>.



RATCHET & CLANK

GOING COMMANDO

SHOW US YOUR WEAPON! CONTEST

Design a new weapon for Ratchet and you could upgrade your lifestyle!

Visit www.ratchetandclank.com to download the official entry form and for more details.

GRAND PRIZE

A trip for two to Los Angeles to visit Insomniac Games and \$5,000 to upgrade your lifestyle!

FIRST PRIZE

Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando poster autographed by the development team!

No Purchase Necessary. Must be a U.S. resident 18 years of age or older. Contest ends 1/31/04. For full rules and to download the official form, visit www.ratchetandclank.com. Void where prohibited.

SHOW US YOUR WEAPON! NATIONAL CONTEST OFFICIAL RULES

Insomniac Games Inc. ("Insomniac") is sponsoring a contest to design a new weapon for Ratchet and Clank: Going Commando. The contest is open to U.S. residents 18 years of age or older. The contest ends on January 31, 2004. The contest is open to U.S. residents 18 years of age or older. The contest is open to U.S. residents 18 years of age or older. The contest is open to U.S. residents 18 years of age or older.

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PlayStation®2

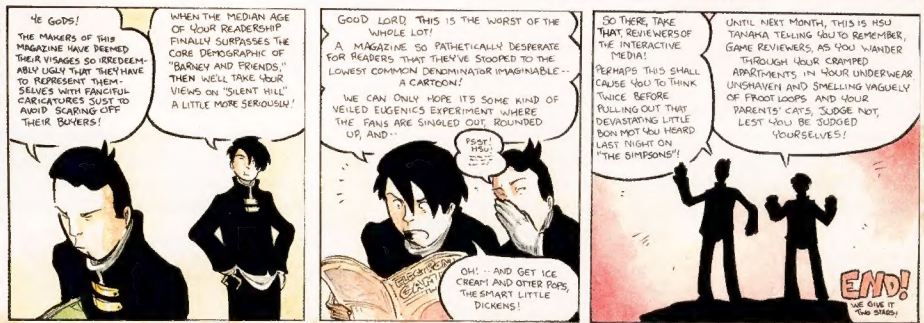
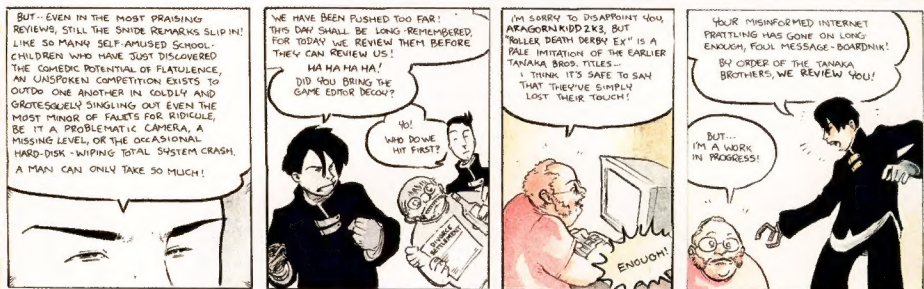
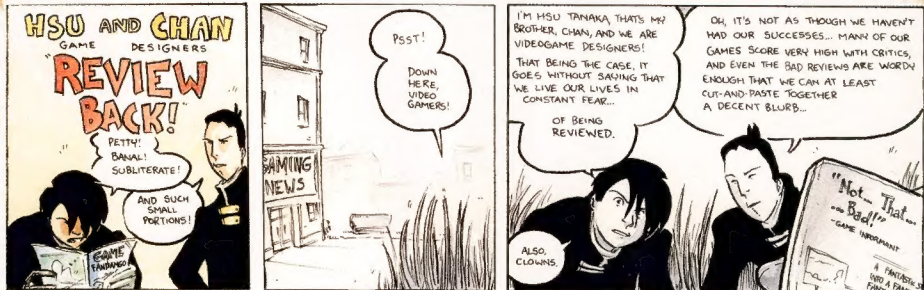




SAM WANTS YOU TO VOTE FOR THE BEST GAMES OF 2003!

LOG ON TO WWW.IUP.COM TO CAST YOUR VOTES FOR YOUR CHOICE OF THE BEST PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX, GAMECUBE, GAME BOY ADVANCE, PC, ONLINE, GAMING RIGS, AND THE TOP GAME OF THE YEAR! WINNERS WILL BE ANNOUNCED ON JANUARY 8 AT THE 2004 INTERNATIONAL CONSUMER ELECTRONICS SHOW (CES) IN LAS VEGAS.





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Wireless Online Gaming Made Easy

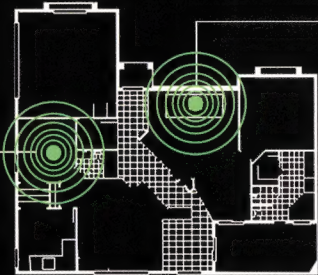


[Base Unit]

plug in here

broadband internet location:

[NW sector: Long Origin = 7.43958333,
Lat Origin = 46.95240556]



play here

gaming console location:

[SE sector: Long Origin = 7.43922453,
Lat Origin = 46.95294523]



[Remote Unit]



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